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Joe

by Rick Mattingly

I always felt that Joe Morello epitomized *Modern Drummer* founder Ron Spagnardi's philosophy about what the magazine should be. As Ron explained to me when I became an *MD* editor in 1981, he wanted us to be on top of the newest developments in drumming and music, with the firm understanding that those who move drumming forward are well grounded in what came before. So *MD* would typically have an article about today's young drumming phenom alongside a story about a legendary drummer from the past. Rock, jazz, country, studio, Latin, classical—Ron felt that no matter what someone's specialty was, we could all learn from each other.

During his tenure with the Dave Brubeck Quartet in the 1950s and '60s, Morello was the very definition of a "modern" drummer. His mastery of odd time signatures was so far ahead of the crowd that twenty years later his playing didn't sound the least dated. And when it came to learning about the traditions of drumming, meeting Joe was like hitting the mother lode. For starters, he had studied with George Lawrence Stone (the author of *Stick Control*) and Billy Gladstone (the legendary Radio City Music Hall drummer, who even Buddy Rich was in awe of). Just mention a well-known drummer's name and Joe could imitate and analyze that person's style.

He also kept up with the younger players. I recall taking him to a local music store where Simon Phillips was doing a clinic. Joe was very impressed with Simon—who was delighted when Joe showed up. At Modern Drummer Festivals and PASICs Joe was always as interested in seeing what the young drummers were doing as he was in visiting with old friends. He participated in several PASIC drumset master classes, offering encouragement and advice to those who were selected to play for him. And he performed at PASIC 2003 with the Louisville Leopard Percussionists, an ensemble made up of elementary school students. Again, he was complimentary and encouraging to the kids, and they were thrilled to play "Take Five" with him.

Joe also respected and was friends with many drummers and percussionists outside the jazz world. Although jazz was his chosen art form, he never tried to push his students in a particular stylistic direction. I once commented to Joe that I was surprised to learn that Danny Gottlieb had studied with him so extensively, because Danny didn't sound anything like Joe. "It's really a compliment to me that he doesn't sound like me," Morello said. "I never said to Danny, 'Play it this way.' I always left how he used the stuff up to him. 'Play *you*, man; don't play me.'"

One thing that everyone who knew him will miss is his sense of humor, which could be brutal but was always hilarious. I'll never be fooled again by a strange voice on the phone saying something along the lines of, "Mr. Mattingly? My name is Marvin Schwartz, and I disagree with your latest review." I'd start to defend myself, and then I'd recognize Joe's laugh. I'm going to miss those calls.

Joe had deep connections with *Modern Drummer*. In addition to numerous articles, columns, Ask a Pros, and quotes, we started our book publishing division with his *Master Studies*, which was followed years later by *Master Studies II* and now the reissued *Rudimental Jazz*. Joe lived nearby and came to the office often, and many *MD* editors hung out with him regularly.

Modern Drummer has had relationships with thousands of drummers over the years. Some have been casual and fleeting; some have been close and long lasting. Joe Morello was family.

Between 1981 and 1990, Rick Mattingly held the posts of features editor and senior editor at Modern Drummer *magazine.*

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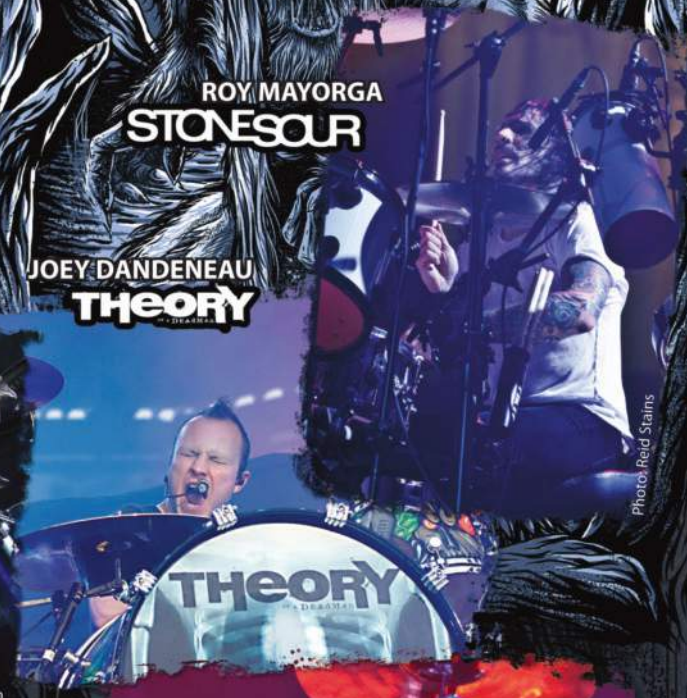

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John "JR" Robinson

Excellent article on John "JR" Robinson in the April 2011 issue! He's always been one of my favorites. I can always tell it's him on the songs he's recorded over the years. All his tracks on Steve Winwood's *Back in the High Life* are brilliant—I wore that record out in the late '80s. Another favorite groove of mine is Michael Jackson's "Workin' Day and Night" from *Off the Wall*. All great stuff!
John Rogers

The Bigger Picture

I was truly knocked out by Adam Budofsky's editorial in the April issue. Our society is too hell-bent on profit and not recognizing the power of love, compassion, and integrity. As an educator I always try to give my best for the benefit of others and hope that my students will follow my example. You have the power to reach so many more, and you chose to speak out for what you see as a better way. I'm very moved by your decision and what you had to say. Bravo!
Matt Patuto

I received the April issue of *Modern Drummer* on the same day that I learned of the passing of a good friend. At a time when I was left wondering about my place in this world and what it is that I really contribute to the lives of others, Adam Budofsky's editorial piece, "The Big Picture," helped remind me of who I am, what I have to contribute, and who it is I do it for. Never did I expect something I would come across in my favorite drumming publication to enlighten me, heal me, and move me in such a way. My sincere appreciation to Mr. Budofsky for an insightful essay that served to demonstrate the very humanity of which he wrote.
Gary D. Gochenour

The Editor's Overview from April 2011 really points up why it is always a bad idea to mix politics with your day job. Mr. Budofsky would probably try to wave his hands and say his message wasn't political. But this is of course nonsense. Lame, transparent attempts to link a paean to Obama with a NAMM appraisal aside, the only way he could be so effectively hoodwinked by Obama's speech is if he were infatuated with the man's image, as so many of Obama's cultlike followers seem to be. As for the speech itself, to me it was blatantly offensive. Mr. Budofsky, if you love Obama, that's your own issue to deal with. Bear in mind that the majority of Americans—and quite probably your readership—do not. In the long run I would advise you to educate yourself politically. But in the short run, let's keep this nonsense out of a drumming magazine.
Jeffrey Parsons

I want to thank Adam Budofsky for his Editor's Overview, "The Bigger Picture," in the April issue. It spoke to me as an individual, husband, father, and drummer. It takes courage in this industry to truly speak your heart and mind, and I commend you for doing just that in your essay. I personally needed that on so many levels right now in my life, and I thank God for using you to speak His heart and, of course, yours!
Matt Johnson

It's Questionable

In It's Questionable in the April issue, Harry Cangany says he's not sure why the number 409 is stamped on the shell of the Supra-Phonic snare. The number is not 409, it's 489. I'm pretty sure that means the build date, month and year—April 1989.
Joel Steward

CANGANY RESPONDS

You have sharp-eyed readers! I agree that the stamp says 489. Also, while I have you, in the Rogers PowerTone article in Collector's Corner in the same issue, there is an inaccuracy in the sixth paragraph, in the sentence that reads: "The PowerTone snare is wrapped in gold sparkle; Rogers called it gold glitter." This should read, "The PowerTone snare is wrapped in gold glitter." Thanks.
Harry J. Cangany Jr.

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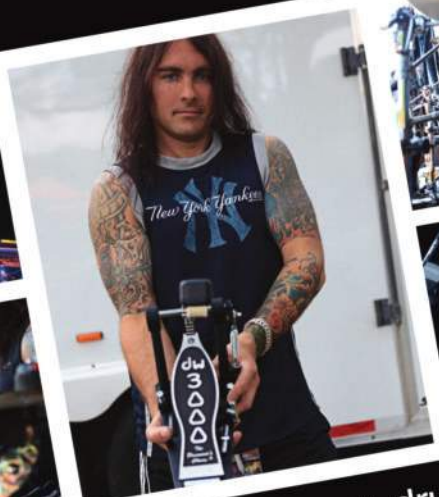

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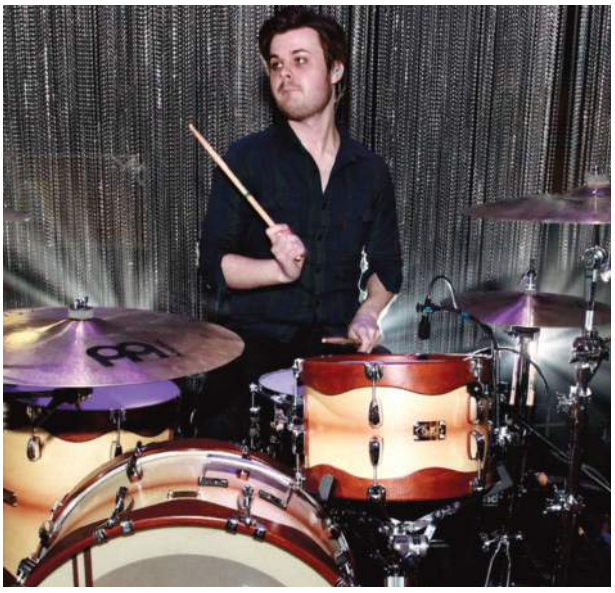
SPENCER SMITH

Half a lineup left? **Panic! at the Disco finds power in the union** of two drumming minds.



Las Vegas twosome Panic! at the Disco used to be a foursome. But with two members gone for good, drummer Spencer Smith raised his game for *Vices & Virtues*, adopting co-songwriting duties with singer/multi-instrumentalist Brendon Urie. The duo hit pay dirt with leadoff single "The Ballad of Mona Lisa," which features Smith's synthetic drum sounds—or are they?

"Anything goes," Smith says of his band's approach to recording. "On some tracks on *Vices & Virtues* we played electronic drums over acoustic drums. I'd play electronic sounds on pads on a mini keyboard through Reason, finger-tapping a part if I just needed a kick drum, for example. For a couple parts, we sampled real drums and put them through filters, and it resulted in something that sounds electronic but is really an effected acoustic kit. That's what fit those particular songs. We're pretty amateur with it. We're both drummers, so we don't try to create parts that are completely unplayable live.

"And we don't line everything up on the grid," Smith continues. "We want it to feel good, like we're playing it in a room. Nowadays it's possible to go back and reedit everything you've played. At that point you may as well have programmed everything to begin with."

In addition to stellar drum tracks, Smith also plays percussion on *Vices & Virtues*. "The Calendar," which features a layered background pattern that recalls Manu Katché, is, Spencer says, "the album's most exciting track rhythmically. It's our take on a Peter Gabriel song. I played a kalimba over my '60s Ludwig kit, and then as we get into the song, there are shakers, bongos, a couple djembes that we both played, congas…. It was very fun. And I overdubbed a hi-hat track; I was able to solo there, accenting 16th notes with the pattern. That rhythm track took around six hours to record in total." **Ken Micallef**

AL FOSTER

Life after Miles is a swingin' affair.

"The band was tight," says legendary drummer Al Foster of his recent straight-ahead live album, *Love, Peace and Jazz!*, recorded at the Village Vanguard. "We were listening, and it was very melodic. That's the way I like to play. It comes from the '40s, when musicians would complement each other."

Foster rose to prominence after succeeding Jack DeJohnette in Miles Davis's '70s electric bands, contributing a rock-solid groove to some of the trumpeter's most controversial records, including *On the Corner*, the live *Dark Magus*, and the '80s comeback albums. Since that time, Foster has been a first-call drummer for countless all-star tribute bands while also leading his own traditional jazz groups on continuing world tours. His saxophonist, Eli Degibri, returns the favor and features Foster's graceful ride cymbal and conversational soloing on his own newest date, *Israeli Song*. Along with the seasoned approach of venerable sidemen Ron Carter and Brad Mehldau, Foster's playing exhibits the wisdom of years. And what's it like being a sideman for one of your own band members? "The way you play is the way you play," Foster says. "You bring your style to whatever you do."

After forty years on the scene, the drummer is still learning new tricks. "I'm trying to play less when keeping time behind a soloist," Foster says, "not answering every phrase with the left hand and bass drum. You want to be on it, but not on everything. I'm also working on playing as tastefully as possible. That's what's missing from these younger players." A lesson from Mr. Davis? "Miles told me, 'If you don't hear it, don't play it.'" **Ilya Stemkovsky**

OUT NOW ON CD

SIMON PHILLIPS on *21 Spices*

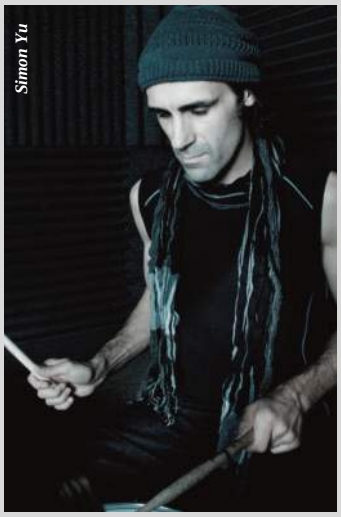
Indian drumset and percussion master Trilok Gurtu and rock and fusion legend Simon Phillips had been planning to work together since meeting at Zildjian Day in London in 1993. Recently, when the internationally acclaimed German NDR Big Band organized a project with Gurtu, Trilok suggested Phillips for the drum chair, bringing their long-awaited collaboration to fruition. The outcome is a beautifully orchestrated collection of Gurtu compositions featuring the stellar twenty-one-piece ensemble (hence the CD's title).

The rhythmically complex music intertwines world and jazz styles with masterful harmonic and melodic arrangements from NDR's Wolf Kerschek. Phillips received the charts and music via email and began learning the complicated arrangements for rehearsal. "I never sat down behind a kit and played the charts," he says. "It's all done in my head, in my hotel room, or on an airplane.

"Learning the Indian Konnakol sections was overwhelming at first," Simon continues. "But after spending a little time with them, I found they began to make sense. The Indian rhythms are not really metronomic. If you put a click to it, it would never work. Indian musicians feel the syllables; they move with the ebb and flow of the music. That's the clash of Eastern and Western rhythmic cultures in a nutshell." **Mike Haid**

TOBIAS RALPH

The timekeeper for Tricky and Lauryn Hill applies advanced drumming science to modern groove music.


Simon Yu

In an extended solo on his forthcoming instructional DVD, Tobias Ralph rips 16th-note singles around the kit with gale-force speed. We're not simply talking velocity but also touch, texture, and seamless hand-to-hand coordination. A veteran who's recently worked with Adrian Belew and Marco Minneman between stints with Lauryn Hill and Tricky, Ralph is a quiet man with a mighty drumming arsenal.

"Work on your motion around the drumset," advises Ralph, who also teaches at New York City's Drummers Collective. "For practice, I'll play a constant 16th-note single-stroke roll around the kit, but within a groove. I'll include a 2-and-4 backbeat within the roll, with the bass drum on 1 or on all four beats. The backbeat gives me a time reference. It trains you so that when you're playing R&B gigs and you're required to solo, you don't interrupt the flow."

Ralph's DVD will deal with the structures of electronic dance music as applied to the acoustic set. Tracks will include live performances, sequencer accompaniment, and, of course, Tobias's spectacular left-hand acrobatics. "I like taking simple groupings with four on the bass drum," the drummer explains, "and accenting the first note of each grouping on the toms with my right hand, then filling in the other notes with my left hand on the snare drum. Each time you get to a longer phrase, you have to play more notes with your left hand. You get a polyrhythmic thing going. First you're playing four, then five against four, then six over four, seven over four, etc. The motion is similar to the Moeller technique, like turning a doorknob with your wrist." **Ken Micallef**

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Also on the Shelves

Death Cab for Cutie Codes and Keys (Jason McGerr) /// **Booker T. Jones** The Road From Memphis (Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson) /// **The Elected** Bury Me in My Rings (Jason Boesel, Ryland Steen, Sander Steen) /// **Adelitas Way** Home School Valedictorian (Trevor Stafford) /// **The New Regime** Speak Through the White Noise (Ilan Rubin) /// **David Caceres** David Caceres (Bill Stewart, Bashiri Johnson) /// **Ben Wolfe Quintet** Live at Smalls (Gregory Hutchinson) /// **Donny McCaslin** Perpetual Motion (Antonio Sanchez, Mark Guiliana) /// **David Binney** Graylen Epicenter (Brian Blade, Dan Weiss, Kenny Wollesen, Rogerio Boccato) /// **Paul Oscher** Bet on the Blues (Willie "Big Eyes" Smith, Per Hansen)

JOHN BLACKWELL

Prince's main man is back where he's supposed to be.

Jose Altonaga

John Blackwell has been through it all these past few years, professionally and personally. His ups have been as high as the sky—appearing on his second *MD* cover, completing two instructional DVDs, releasing his long-awaited solo debut, getting remarried, and touring with Prince, Justin Timberlake, and one of Japan's biggest-selling artists, Crystal Kay.

John has also experienced lows that would dampen the spirit of most—losing his two-year-old daughter, Jia, to a drowning accident, getting divorced, and, most recently, enduring the passing of his father—all of which, he says, "tested my faith." But the drummer's deeply held beliefs have helped him come out stronger than ever and land right where he belongs at this time in his life—back with Prince, providing the funk on the Welcome 2 America tour. Blackwell couldn't be happier. "This tour is very different from Prince's other ones," he says, "because we're not going city to city overnight. We set up a residence for a month or so in a major city like L.A. or New York and then perform in nearby cities."

Blackwell feels that he's recently formed a closer musical relationship with the superstar. "I'm more relaxed about my playing and about what Prince is looking for from me as a musician. On previous tours, I was sometimes unsure what he wanted me to play on certain songs, regardless of how well I thought I knew his music. I'm much more confident now."

Last year Blackwell released his first solo album, *4ever Jia*, featuring an all-star group he called the John Blackwell Project. "The CD was in the making for almost six years," John explains. "I began [writing the music] right after my daughter passed away. When recording it with the band finally became a reality, it was easy to do because the songs were in my head. I already knew what I was going to play, and the most important thing was to have control and not play too much. My dad always reminded me that there's a key word, KISS—keep it simple and sweet."

So what's next for the powerhouse drummer? "I'm currently writing music and pre-recording for the *John Blackwell Project 2* CD, which will again be a slow process because of my touring with Prince. But once the music is finished and ready to be recorded, it'll be done and out before you know it." For more, go to johnblackwellproject.com. **Billy Amendola**

John Blackwell was recently honored by local and state leaders in his hometown of Columbia, South Carolina. (He graduated from Columbia's W.J. Keenan High School in 1991.) Mayor Steve Benjamin proclaimed March 21, 2011, to be John Blackwell Jr. and John Blackwell Sr. Day, in John and his late father's honor, and John received a special commendation and the key to the city. In addition, Prince, on behalf of himself and his band, donated $250,000 to the Eau Claire Promise Zone, an area that is part of the nationwide Promise Neighborhoods nonprofit campaign, which aims to prepare students to graduate from college and start a career.

Chris Pennie

This month, the Coheed and Cambria drummer discusses how his film and commercial projects are often directly tied to his adventurous approach to the drums.

Paul La Rata

What commercial and soundtrack projects have you been working on lately?

The film scoring stuff with my production company, Fight Mannequins, is really picking up now. We did some work with a company called Team Detroit for the Ford Focus relaunch, as well as projects with Pete Flores and *Hook, Line & Skillet* and a StrawberryFrog promo with director Gary Nadeau. I feel like I'm branching out so much.

How would a drummer go about getting involved in commercial or soundtrack work?

The biggest thing is finding someone who's like-minded. I have a partner, Brett Aveni, who's the guitarist in our band Return to Earth. It's like forming a band. You get together, you have this idea of what you want, you start learning the language of what you're trying to convey. And it's a totally different world.

Being in the music world, there are certain people you meet along the way: composers, filmmakers, people who put on Broadway shows…. You just casually bring it up that you're into this kind of thing. All the people we work for, we've done favors for, and vice versa, and you keep those relationships. We got the gig with Ford because I'd dropped some drums on a couple of tunes for two of the people who worked for the ad agency. A year later, they said, "Hey, can you send us some music you guys have written? We need some music for a couple Web commercials."

If you want the work, basically you have to go out and seek it.

How was the Ford project brought to you? Were they specific about what they wanted?

They had a couple ideas in mind, and when we put it down…it was not what they wanted. [laughs] They told us they wanted something hip, something indie-ish, but it wound up being piano with strings over it. Sometimes they won't really know what they want until we drop some music over the visuals, which is totally fine. And then other people come into play who might suggest revisions.

Ultimately it's the same thing as being a drummer in a band—what does the music call for? If there's a lot of dialogue, you're not going to have a lot of crazy stuff going on, because it's just going to get in the way. And that's related to composition and knowing about instrument ranges. Like if the voice-over guy has a real low voice, you're not going to bring in bass in his speaking range, so you might want to go a little higher. You may try to go a little rhythmic, and other times it might be no drums at all. It just depends on the vibe of the video.

Does this sort of work force you to ramp up certain musical skills?

Drumming is my first love, and there are so many things you can do "as a drummer." You can be melodic—think of guys like Terry Bozzio. I want to explore all that, furthering myself on my principal instrument. But at the same time it's nice to supplement that with other things. I'm studying orchestration. For people who don't have the chance to work directly with an orchestra, there are programs like Vienna Symphonic Library, which gives you a nice hands-on experience. Learning about ranges of instruments comes in handy when you eventually work with real players.

So for me it's an ongoing process—keep learning, keep listening, keep being inspired, keep it fresh with different styles and different instruments.

Are there particular soundtrack composers who you're drawn to?

Everything John Williams has done is phenomenal. It's complex; he's taking from so many classical composers and mixing that into his own style. It's one thing listening to his compositions by themselves, but then listening to how they work behind the films is pretty amazing.

I also like Hans Zimmer. He's taken advantage of the age we're in. For instance, he'll sample the London Symphony Orchestra and use that in conjunction with live musicians. I can identify with that, because I don't have the budget to commission an orchestra or choir. I thought the *Power of One* soundtrack was particularly great, and *The Dark Knight* and *Inception* soundtracks too.

How does your soundtrack and commercial work relate to your drumming?

It's made me think more about having control over things like dynamics and articulations. It's been interesting diving into this soundtrack stuff, because articulations and dynamics are written out all over the paper. You're forced to really pay attention to what those markings are. With violins, for instance, a very simple thing like staccato versus legato makes a massive difference in sound. A violin playing staccato at a fast tempo can sound menacing. When you play drums, you're going to play a double-stroke roll to get a very legato sound, as opposed to using all sorts of different stick heights for a staccato sound. I've had to think more specifically.

Has your choice of instruments changed too?

That's gotten more specific as well. I would mess around with different configurations and different-size cymbals in the past, but now I've been using things like the Sabian Chopper and these small Radia Cups as hi-hat cymbals. I've also been thinking of technique things, like using certain sticking positions to get staccato definition off the ride cymbal, like when a lot of 8th notes are played at 160, 170 bpm, trying to deaden the stick a little, really thinking about how tightly I'm grabbing the stick and using a little more wrist to bring a more muted definition out of the cymbal. Same with the hi-hats, like stepping real hard on the hats to get a choked, mechanical sound. There are all these things to discover.

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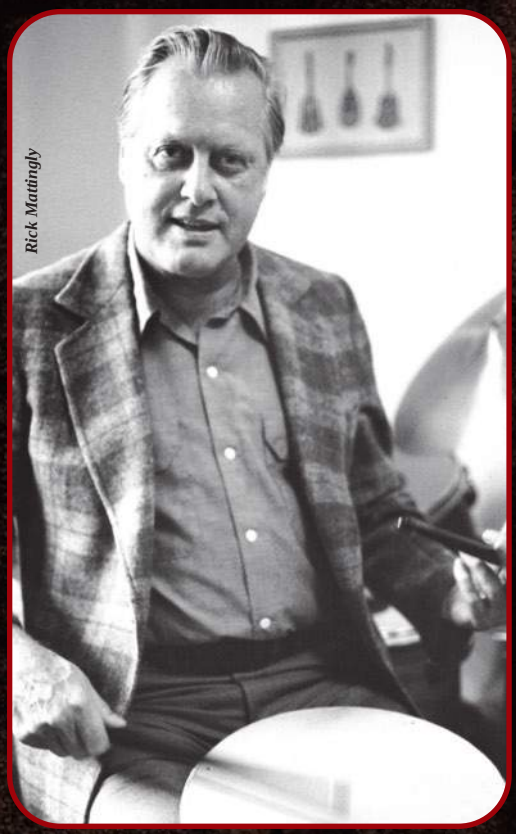
MODERN DRUMMER 2011 READERS POLL Winners

Welcome once again to the *MD* Readers Poll, where the greatest drummers on the planet are honored by the most educated drum fans around. Let's get right to it: the envelope, please….


Rick Mattingly

2010: Hal Blaine
2009: Mitch Mitchell
2008: Ginger Baker
2007: Jack DeJohnette
2006: Charlie Watts
2005: Stewart Copeland
2004: Mike Portnoy
2003: Simon Phillips
2002: Steve Smith
2001: Dennis Chambers
2000: Dave Weckl
1999: Roy Haynes
1998: Ringo Starr
1997: Terry Bozzio
1996: Vinnie Colaiuta
1995: Elvin Jones
1994: Larrie Londin
1993: Jeff Porcaro
1992: Max Roach
1991: Art Blakey
1990: Bill Bruford
1989: Carl Palmer
1988: Joe Morello
1987: Billy Cobham
1986: Tony Williams
1985: Louie Bellson
1984: Steve Gadd
1983: Neil Peart
1982: Keith Moon
1981: John Bonham
1980: Buddy Rich
1979: Gene Krupa

HALL OF FAME

JIM CHAPIN

Jim Chapin likely spent more one-on-one time helping drummers with their playing than any other person in history. A direct link to the timeless teachings of drum instructor Sanford Moeller, Jim would hold court at drumming events for hours at a time, demonstrating the Moeller technique, among other technical matters, to any player who would listen—and there were *thousands* who did, and who are better players today for it. After establishing his drumming career on the New York jazz scene, Chapin wrote the instructional book *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer* in 1948. Since its introduction, "the Chapin book," as it's commonly known, has been considered the definitive study on coordinated independence as applied to jazz drumming, influencing legendary players like Max Roach, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Dave Weckl. Chapin passed away on July 4, 2009.

Alex Solca

MVP

MIKE PORTNOY

It might seem odd for former Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy to win the title of MVP soon after leaving the band he helped found, a group that supplied the framework for Mike's massively popular brand of progressive rock drumming. But by taking on the daunting task of filling in for the recently deceased Jimmy "the Rev" Sullivan with Avenged Sevenfold—on the *Nightmare* record and on tour—Portnoy reminded old fans and convinced new ones of his remarkable ability to add fire and finesse to the most intensely demanding of musical situations.

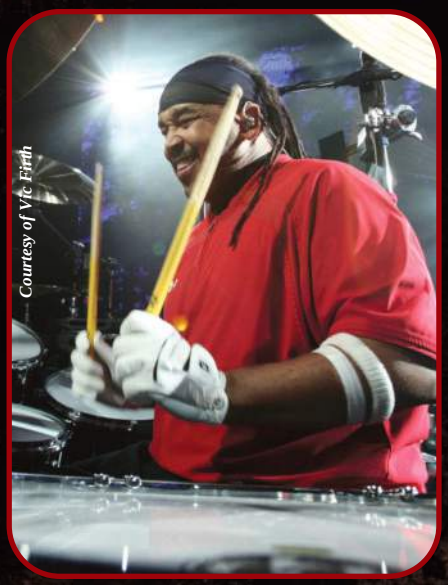
Ash Newell

MAINSTREAM ROCK

DAVE GROHL

In the biggest landslide of the 2011 poll, *MD* readers recognized the Foo Fighters leader's killer performance on the debut album by Them Crooked Vultures, the supergroup that also features Led Zeppelin's John Paul Jones and Queens of the Stone Age's Josh Homme. Grohl is absolutely commanding on the Vultures' adventurous and progressive heavy rock, which he talked at length about in his August 2010 *MD* cover story.

2. Matt Cameron • 3. Ray Luzier
4. Phil Rudd • 5. Tré Cool


Courtesy of Vic Firth

POP
CARTER BEAUFORD

There's no end to the fascination *MD* readers hold for the drummer with the Dave Matthews Band. DMB had yet another huge year in 2010, with the album *Live in New York City* following on the heels of 2009's studio release, *Big Whiskey and the GrooGrux King*, the group's fifth consecutive number one.

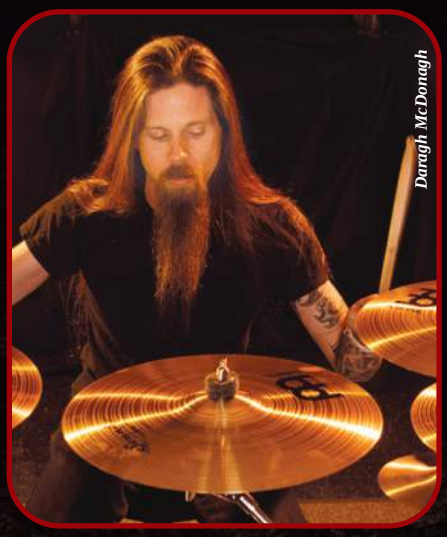
2. Steve Jordan • 3. Keith Carlock
4. Teddy Campbell • 5. Keith Harris

Richard Sibbald

ALTERNATIVE
JACK WHITE

When you got it, you got it. Recently the modern-day renaissance man not only captivated audiences with his role in the film *It Might Get Loud* (alongside Jimmy Page and the Edge), a live album and film with his now-defunct band the White Stripes, and peerless production jobs for rockabilly legend Wanda Jackson and singer-songwriter (and wife) Karen Elson, but he also proved he was a totally badass drummer, on two recent albums by the Dead Weather and on stage. In his September '09 *MD* feature, White revealed that he was in fact a drummer first, which makes perfect sense when you listen to his idiosyncratic yet completely at-ease performances.

2. Chris Pennie • 3. Dominic Howard
4. Glenn Kotche • 5. Jason McGerr


Daragh McDonagh

METAL
CHRIS ADLER

A shoo-in for top honors in the metal category, Lamb of God's self-taught rhythm wizard spent much of 2009 and 2010 headlining tours and major festivals behind the band's well-received *Wrath* studio album and *Hourglass* box set. Recently Adler also set out on a successful clinic tour, wrote a number of articles for *MD*, had a signature snare drum produced by Mapex, and released a book of transcriptions and personal reflections, *New American Gospel*.

2. Joey Jordison • 3. Morgan Rose
4. Gene Hoglan • 5. Brann Dailor

Andrew MacNaughtan

PROG
NEIL PEART

Rush's iconic rhythmatist is never far from drummers' minds, and with the band's ongoing international Time Machine tour and much-anticipated upcoming album, *Clockwork Angels*, keeping the chat rooms ablaze, the allure of Peart's unique gifts is as high as it's ever been. Adding to the buzz over the past year has been word of Neil's soon-to-be-released instructional double DVD, the widely aired Rush documentary *Beyond the Lighted Stage*, and the release of *Classic Albums: 2112 and Moving Pictures*.

2. Mike Portnoy • 3. Gavin Harrison
4. Marco Minnemann • 5. Aquiles Priester

Paul La Raia

R&B
AHMIR "QUESTLOVE" THOMPSON

Jimmy Fallon's bandleader gets more airtime and opportunities to play alongside the top musicians of our day than most any drummer. Even outside late-night, though, Quest is a pop-culture magnet, deejaying, serving as associate producer of the Broadway play *Fela!*—and nonstop tweeting about all these projects and more. But it all wouldn't be worth much to *MD* readers if Thompson didn't back it up with intriguing performances on stage and on record, applying his refined groove approach to gigs with artists including Grammy winner John Legend, Duffy, and Al Green.

2. Aaron Spears • 3. Chris Coleman
4. Tony Allen • 5. Chris Dave

Paul La Raia

JAZZ
BRIAN BLADE

It's apparently not enough for Brian Blade to be considered one of the most scintillating jazz drummers around, leading the Fellowship Band and putting in serious work with the likes of Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea, and John Patitucci. He also fronts his own decidedly non-jazz project and regularly appears on albums by legendary singer-songwriters like Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Emmylou Harris.

2. Antonio Sanchez • 3. Johnathan Blake
4. Jim Black • 5. Eric Harland

Pascal Milette

FUSION

VINNIE COLAIUTA

No matter how many big-name pop records Vinnie lends his elegant and commanding drumming to, he always seems to appear on some ridiculously shredding discs as well. So recently, in between recording with Natasha Bedingfield, Clay Aiken, and Boyz II Men, Colaiuta's kept our appetite for red-meat drumming satiated with releases like Mark Egan's *Truth Be Told* and Kermit Driscoll's *Reveille*—both of which are reviewed in this issue of *MD*.

2. Steve Smith • 3. Billy Cobham
4. Ronald Bruner Jr.
5. Narada Michael Walden

Alex Solca

STUDIO

JOSH FREESE

It's been another banner year for the SoCal drum star. In between concerts with Weezer, Devo, the Vandals, and A Perfect Circle, Josh has lent his talents to albums by Michael Bublé, Devo, Avril Lavigne, Katy Perry, Slash, Ron Sexsmith, and Social Distortion and to soundtracks for films like *Burlesque* and *Get Him to the Greek*—not to mention his own latest CD, *My New Friends*.

2. Matt Chamberlain • 3. Ben Sesar
4. Shawn Pelton • 5. Shannon Forrest

Gene Ambo

COUNTRY

JIM RILEY

Rascal Flatts' drummer and bandleader has been rocking the enormously popular contemporary country group's shows and albums for more than ten years. And his clinics—such as his master class at the 2011 MD Fest—are some of the most informative and best-attended around. Recently Riley also saw his first educational book, *Chart Writing Made Easy*, published by Hal Leonard.

2. Ben Sesar • 3. Rich Redmond
4. Trey Gray • 5. Chris McHugh

Alex Solca

CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR

STEVE GADD

Zildjian's Mission From Gadd clinic tour reminded the world that there are few—if any—players who command more attention and adulation among drummers than Steve Gadd does.

2. Stanton Moore
3. Mike Johnston
4. Benny Greb
5. Jim Riley

Courtesy of Gretsch

UP & COMING

MIKE BYRNE

This young drummer beat out a slew of seasoned pros for the coveted Smashing Pumpkins gig. Drummers who heard the Pumpkins' subsequent series of EPs or caught them live immediately saw what bandleader Billy Corgan saw—an exciting and solid drummer who's clearly got a prosperous future ahead of him.

2. Billy Rymer • 3. Arejay Hale
4. Ulysses Owens Jr. • 5. Tanner Wayne

Alex Solca

PERCUSSIONIST

LUIS CONTE

Dancing With the Stars, the Grammy Awards…at this point, Luis Conte is a fixture at the world's most important live events—and continues to be the first-call percussionist for artists such as Mariah Carey, Patti Austin, and Smokey Robinson.

2. Lenny Castro • 3. Pete Lockett
4. Zakir Hussain • 5. Bashiri Johnson

EDUCATIONAL BOOK

GROOVE ALCHEMY BY STANTON MOORE

2. *Rhythmic Designs* **by Gavin Harrison and Terry Branam**
3. *Breaking the Code* **by David Garibaldi**
4. *Rock Solid: Drums* **by Liberty DeVitto and Sean J. Kennedy**
5. *Intro to Polyrhythms* **by Ari Hoenig**

EDUCATIONAL DVD

GROOVE ALCHEMY BY STANTON MOORE

2. *Great Hands for a Lifetime* **by Tommy Igoe**
3. *The Infallible Reason of My Freak Drumming* **by Aquiles Priester**
4. *Blast Beats Evolved* **by Derek Roddy**
5. *The Big Picture* **by Keith Carlock**

RECORDED PERFORMANCE

MIKE PORTNOY,

NIGHTMARE (AVENGED SEVENFOLD)

2. **Terry Bozzio,** *Philly '76* **(Frank Zappa)**
3. **Dave Grohl,** *Them Crooked Vultures* **(Them Crooked Vultures)**
4. **Gene Hoglan,** *Dethalbum II* **(Dethklok)**
5. **Paul Motian,** *Lost in a Dream* **(Paul Motian, Chris Potter, Jason Moran)**

Congrats to all the winners

Mainstream Rock Winner
Dave Grohl

Jazz Winner
Brian Blade

Pop Winner
Carter Beauford

Fusion Winner
Vinnie Colaiuta

R&B Winner
?uestlove

Clinician/Educator Winner
Steve Gadd

Up & Coming Winner
Mike Byrne

Percussionist Winner
Luis Conte

Mainstream Rock Runners-Up: **Matt Cameron &Tré Cool**
Alternative Runners-Up: **Dominic Howard & Glenn Kotche**
Pop Runners-Up: **Keith Carlock & Teddy Campbell**
Metal Runner-Up: **Morgan Rose** Percussion Runner-Up: **Pete Lockett**
Prog Runners-Up: **Gavin Harrison & Marco Minnemann**
R&B Runners-Up: **Aaron Spears & Tony Allen**
Jazz Runners-Up: **Antonio Sanchez & Eric Harland**
Fusion Runners-Up: **Steve Smith & Ronald Bruner Jr.**
Studio Runners-Up: **Matt Chamberlin & Shawn Pelton**
Up & Coming Runners-Up: **Billy Rymer, Arejay Hale, Ulysses Owens Jr.**
Educational Book Runners-Up: **Gavin Harrison & Ari Hoenig**
Educational DVD Runners-Up: **Tommy Igoe & Keith Carlock**
Recorded Performance Runners-Up: **Dave Grohl**

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GREG UPCHURCH

1 **IF YOU CAN, TEACH DRUMS TO PEOPLE.** It's as great a tool for you as it is for the student. I think I've learned more from teaching than anywhere else. Plus there isn't anything more gratifying than educating.

2 **GET A GUITAR AND LEARN HOW TO PLAY IT.** Writing music is what this is really all about, and it's a great way to understand how to complement music with percussion.

3 **ALWAYS HAVE A COPY OF *STICK CONTROL*.** You're never too good for that book.

4 **GET INVOLVED IN NON-DRUMMING MUSICAL SETTINGS.** When I was younger I took every music class in school. I also played sax in the band, and that made reading drum charts *so* much easier.

5 **LISTEN TO EVERY TYPE OF MUSIC YOU CAN.** When you limit the things you listen to, you're really limiting yourself.

6 **WATCH SOME EXCITING DRUMMING BEFORE YOU TAKE THE STAGE.** Sometimes I like to get on YouTube and watch great drummers like Steve Gadd or Dennis Chambers before I play, just to inspire me.

7 **TRY TO EAT A GOOD MEAL TWO TO THREE HOURS BEFORE PLAYING.** I don't want to hear my stomach growling instead of the music.

8 **SPEND AT LEAST TWENTY MINUTES STRETCHING YOUR ARMS, ANKLES, WRISTS, AND BACK BEFORE PLAYING.** It's better to feel the burn before you play than in the middle of the second song.

9 **DRINK A LOT OF WATER.** I like to drink two 12-ounce bottles before I hit the stage…and don't forget to pee before the show.

10 **HAVE FUN!**

Congratulations!

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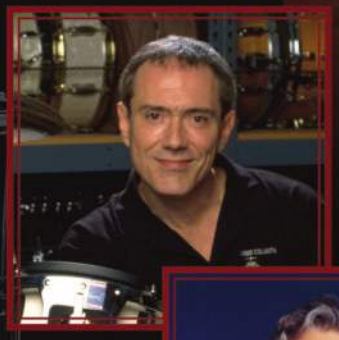
MODERN DRUMMER 2011 READERS POLL Winner

Vinnie Colaiuta - "Fusion"



Luis Conte - "Percussionist"

Chris Adler- "Metal"

Jim Riley
"Country", "Clinician/ Educator"

Lenny Castro
"Percussionist"

Bashiri Johnson - "Percussionist"

Aquiles Priester
"Progressive", "Educational DVD"

www.Gibraltarhardware.com

Removing Plastic Wraps

What is the best way to remove the black cortex wrap from an early-'70s drumkit?
Luís

According to drum restoration expert and *MD* contributor J.R. Frondelli, "You need to use a heat gun, not a hair dryer, and heat the laminate at the seam. Don't worry—it won't melt. Use a scraper to lift up the overlap, and then heat the glue a little at a time to get under it with the scraper blade until it's been removed. Try not to break the laminate. If you do, watch for sharp edges. Alternatively, lacquer thinner can be used to break the glue bond at the seam and around the shell, but that's a much messier and more dangerous method."

THE DOCTOR IS IN

by Asif Khan, M.D.

Back Surgery Recovery Time

I'm twelve days out of L4-L5-S1 spinal fusion surgery, and I'm wondering how long I should stay away from playing the drums.
John Buonomo

Lumbar fusion surgery has been used for a long time to treat back pain and spinal instability, and it's essentially an attempt to get two vertebral segments to grow together and turn into one segment. Conceptually, if you stop the motion between the affected vertebrae, the pain should go away. Not everyone with back pain will need lumbar fusion surgery, and most of the time it's very difficult to find the pain-generating spot.

Two of the most common reasons to get lumbar fusion surgery are severe degenerative disc disease and a slipped vertebral body (also known as spondylolisthesis). The best way to get a diagnosis is to have an MRI.

An anterior lumbar fusion procedure takes about half an hour and is mostly done on an outpatient basis. This is what is normally done for an L5-S1 degenerative disc disease. Here's a quick breakdown of the success rates for this type of surgery: In young adults around forty years of age with level L5-S1 degenerative disc disease (which encompasses 80 percent of all spinal surgeries), 90 percent got substantially better, and 75 percent had almost no pain within four to six weeks.

Although it's a much less common surgery, L4-L5 segment fusions are done as well. There are other treatments for disc disease besides fusion surgery, including IDET, which is an invasive but nonsurgical procedure where a catheter is inserted into the center of a disc and then heated for relief. This procedure has a more temporary effect.

Over the years, lumbar fusions have gotten a bad name, and rightfully so. In the hands of a less skilled surgeon, you might not get a solid fusion, which is called pseudoarthrosis (or nonunion), and the joint is still there and is still moving.

After the surgery, you should limit your activity moderately. In general, it takes about three months for the fusion to complete healing. The idea is to remain relatively still to allow the fusion to set. After three months, however, movement is helpful, to allow the bone to get bigger and stronger with time. Most surgeons would recommend normal daily activities at this point, but not repetitive bending, lifting, or twisting, and no sporting activities or labor. Walking and minimal bending are encouraged. You should expect to feel almost normal within six months to a year. The fusion, if done correctly, should last well into old age.

Back pain can, and often does, arise from a person being overweight around the waistline. The more your abdomen grows away from your spine, the more stress is placed on the ligaments supporting the lower back, thereby weakening it and increasing the risk for vertebrae problems. Plus, lugging your kit around, engaging in repetitive movements (such as drumming), and sitting for hours during a gig increase your risk even more. Proper stretching before playing is very beneficial. In your case, I would lay off playing drums for three to four months after the surgery. You want to be sure your fusion has set and that the bone is beginning to strengthen and grow. But it won't hurt to woodshed on a small practice pad to keep your skills sharp.

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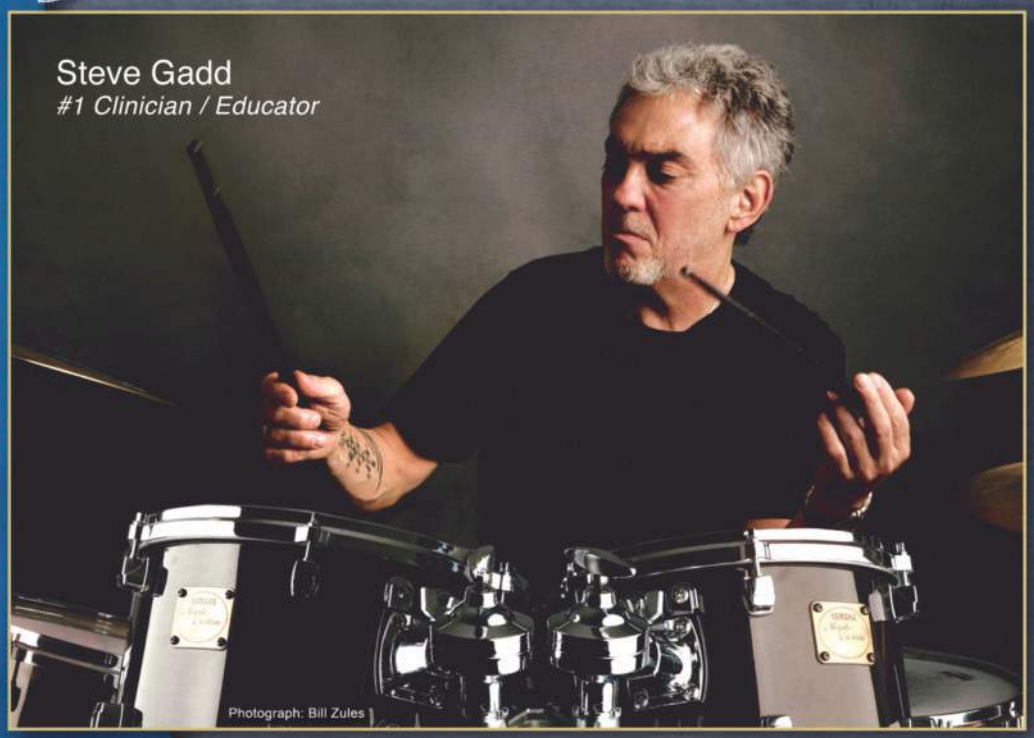

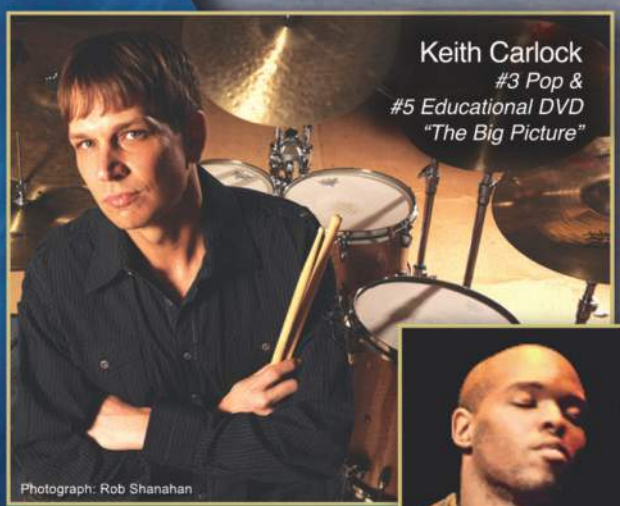

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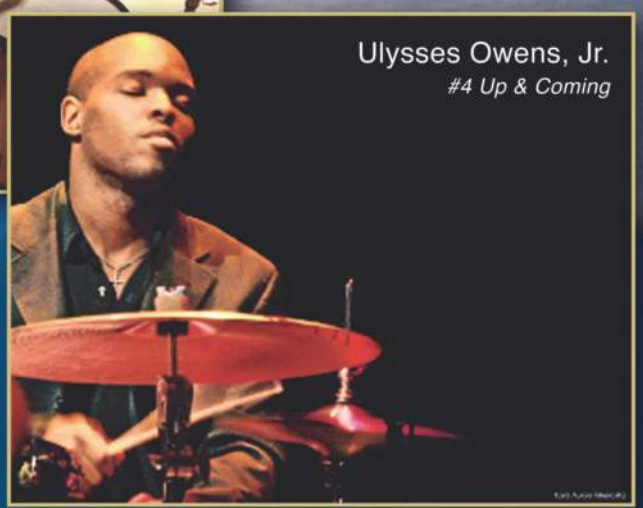

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GRETSCH
CATALINA MAPLE DRUMSET

by Ben Meyer

Gretsch's Catalina line has been around for a few years now, so what makes this maple kit different from the original? Professional-quality heads, 30-degree roundover bearing edges, better hardware, and some new badge artwork are just a few of the many upgraded features.

GOOD FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I was pleased with the fit and finish of the new Catalina Maples from the moment I started unpacking them. All of the bearing edges that I examined were smooth and free of the rough spots that I sometimes find on mid-price drums. The chrome hardware looked great, and the high-gloss transparent ebony finish, which lets some of the maple grain show through, was flawless. (Cherry gloss and amber finishes are also available.) The white coated Gretsch-logo resonant bass drum head really helped set off the finish on these drums.

I also noticed that the functional but generic hardware of the original Catalinas had been replaced by chunky, professional-looking Gretsch-branded tom mounts and floor tom leg brackets. These additions help make the kit feel more high-end and less like a foreign-manufactured likeness of the original. I definitely would expect to pay more for these drums than their actual street price if I saw them in a store window.

SOUND EVIDENCE

As impressed as I was with the appearance of the updated Catalina Maple kit, I was really excited after I got some sounds. The snare and rack toms ship complete, so I was able to give them a good whack right out of the box. I was pleased to hear a warm, open tone from the 8x10 tom on the very first hit. The other drums tuned up easily (7x8, 9x12, and 16x16 toms are also included), and I was pleased with the evenness of the sound from one drum to the next. The toms matched each other well, and none of them stuck out as being

THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS

With all of the new additions to the Catalina Maple series, I found myself wondering what the difference in price would be between these and the originals. Amazingly, the new Catalina Maples list for the same price as the original six-piece shell pack, $1,230.

livelier than another, as is often the case with less expensive drums. The inclusion of Gretsch's high-end, noninvasive GTS tom mounts definitely plays a part in this.

The toms came fitted with coated single-ply batter heads and clear single-ply resonants, all from the newly developed "Gretsch by Evans" line. These heads seemed very similar, if not identical, to Evans coated and clear G1s, and they gave the drums great sustain and warmth. It's refreshing to find a major drum company selling mid-price drums with professional-quality heads.

As I expected from its beefy 18x22 dimensions, the Catalina bass drum sounded huge. Though the included pre-muffled Gretsch by Evans clear batter head gave it nice punch and fullness, I could tell that the drum would kick you in the gut at twenty paces when outfitted with one of the popular pre-muffled heads commonly seen today, plus a bit of additional dampening. So I replaced the stock batter head with an Aquarian Super-Kick II and added a little muffling for the resonant head, which produced the huge punch I had expected.

The 6x14, eight-lug snare sounded great out of the box. It was tuned fairly high, giving it nice sensitivity and a musical ring. After a bit of tweaking, I found that the drum fattened up nicely when I tuned it down and applied some muffling. The coated single-ply Gretsch by Evans batter yielded a widely usable sound.

PROOF IN THE PUDDING

I was looking forward to putting these drums to work, and I was able to use them on several gigs where I played a range of styles, including country, rock, and more jam-oriented material. The toms' strong Gretsch character revealed itself while I was playing a rock standard by an artist whose drummer is a well-known Gretsch endorser. It's no small feat for a mid-price set to achieve a recognizable—and good—signature sound with stock heads and very little tweaking, but these drums did just that. This is surely due to the inclusion of classic Gretsch features like five-lug rack toms and 30-degree roundover bearing edges. The less sharp edges gave the drums a very warm sound and a bit less stick attack. The thicker 7-ply, 7.2 mm maple shells worked well with these bearing edges, which are similar to those found on Gretsch drums from the 1950s and '60s. All that said, these Catalinas had a modern sound that would easily be at home in any style of music.

CONCLUSION

The new Catalina Maple drums delivered strong, resonant sounds in every room I played them in, and they responded well to being muffled to suit the acoustics of each space. I'm always interested in getting non-drummer perspectives on my sound, and the engineer on the first job where I used the Catalina Maples commented that they were some of the best-sounding drums he'd heard in a while. The bandleader on another gig said he liked the look of the kit and thought the white bass drum head was a nice choice. It's always good to keep the boss happy!

With a street price of around $900, the new Catalina Maple drumset is a great value, especially considering its solid build and great sound.

gretschdrums.com

GRETSCH

S-6514WH-MPL SNARE

by Chris Edwards

Sometimes one of the best ways to move forward is to take a look back. The R&D department at Gretsch recently found inspiration on a page from the company's 1971 catalog, where a photo of a long-discontinued line of marching drums with wood hoops got the wheels turning. The result is a brand-new snare drum that has the potential to become an industry classic.

The S-6514 contoured wood-hoop maple snare is part of Gretsch's Full Range series. If you're in the market for a deep but sensitive jazz drum, this is it. If you need a snare to cover bouncy country shuffles, here it is. If you've got to have a snare that serves up the kind of power that would make John Bonham proud, this is the drum. Oh, and it speaks fluent R&B and fusion too.

The aforementioned contoured hoops sit on the top and bottom of a $6^1/_2$x14, 10-ply, 8 mm maple shell in a gloss natural finish. The hoops are made of multiple plies of maple, which are fused together through a heat-and-pressure process. The hoops emerge in true round and are extremely tough. (Gretsch also offers a wood hoop with a metal-reinforced collar, to accommodate heavy hitters.) These hoops are the drum's secret weapons. They produced a rimclick sound that was crisp and full with plenty of cut.

The snare comes with an Evans Genera G1 coated batter head and a medium-weight Hazy resonant. This combination proved to perform great in a wide variety of musical settings, whether I played the drum in a rehearsal room, a club, or even a 13,000-seat outdoor amphitheater. At low tunings the snare produced a fat, warm, full sound. In the medium to high ranges the drum's high end improved, with a brighter, snappier sound. A studio engineer who helped me with our testing was floored. "I've got to get me one of these," he said. You might want to do the same. List price: $615.

ATTACK
ASSORTED DRUMHEADS

by J.R. Frondelli

I often root for the underdog. Perhaps it's the product of a lifelong affection for my beloved New York Mets. And like many people, I love a good deal. Good deals tend to fly under the radar. In the world of musical instruments, there are many mid-line or even entry-level products that yield essentially the same results as their flagship counterparts. This month we're reviewing one of these drum industry underdogs, Attack drumheads.

ATTACK AND CONQUER

About a year ago, a friend gave me some drumheads he didn't need anymore. Among them was a lone Attack snare head, the Bobby Rondinelli signature model. Shortly thereafter, while searching for the right sound for one of my snares, I threw on the Attack head, not expecting much at all. A year later, that head is still on the drum, and it still sounds good!

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

My revelation led me here, to a comprehensive review of Attack drumheads. Credit goes to Tom Shelley, owner of Universal Percussion, the home of Attack heads, which are the brainchild of Shelley and his partner, Jim Bickley. Their intention was to create a lower-cost yet viable and decent-sounding drumhead aimed at the more frugal player. My mission with this review was to find out if Attack heads have been victim to the phenomenon of lower-price products being perceived by many consumers as lower quality.

Attack heads are made in Taiwan. They utilize a crimped-hoop design. The film is held mechanically in the hoop rather than glued, a system pioneered by Ludwig (which still uses it) back in the late '50s. The other three major drumhead manufacturers—Remo, Evans, and Aquarian—utilize a glued-hoop design. Both systems are excellent, but the crimped-hoop design does make it nearly impossible for the head to ever pull from the hoop, as there is no glue to snap, crackle, and give up under an excessive load. It's a weightier system, because the film is wrapped around a metal core rod and then encircled by an open metal sleeve that is crimped mechanically over the rod and film. Extra weight at the bearing edge of a drum, however, will generally translate to a meatier attack and longer sustain.

Like other drumheads, Attack models are made from PET (polyethylene terephthalate) film. Attack's version is called Dynaflex, with the exception of the Terry Bozzio series heads, which are constructed from the more familiar DuPont-branded Mylar PET film. Each film has its own sonic properties.

TESTING, TESTING... ONE, TWO...

The test platform I chose was my early-'90s Ludwig 6-ply kit, in the popular sizes 8x10, 8x12, 13x14, and 16x22. These drums possess fairly thick and somewhat stiff maple/poplar shells, sharp bearing edges, and lacquered interiors, all of which translate to mostly head tone—after all, I wanted to hear the heads, not the shells. The snare drum I used was a $5^1/_2$x14 Pearl brass Sensitone, which is representative of most popular, moderately priced brass drums. No isolation mounts were employed on the toms, and no muffling of any kind was applied.

Attack Drumhead Specification Chart

KEY: C = Coated D = Dynaflex M = Mylar R = No Overtone ring T = Tone Ridge

Model #	Description	Film	Plies	Treatment
TOM HEADS			*in mil*	
DHTS-x	1-ply thin clear	D	7.5	
DHAx	1-ply medium clear	D	10	
DHAxC	1-ply medium coated	D	10	C
DHTS2-x	2-ply medium-thin clear	D	7.5 + 4	
DHTS2-xC	2-ply medium-thin coated	D	7.5 + 4	C
DHx	2-ply medium clear	D	7.5 + 7.5	T
TBx	Terry Bozzio 1-ply clear	M	10	
TBxC	Terry Bozzio 1-ply coated	M	10	C
BASS DRUM HEADS				
SWNOx	1-ply medium No Overtone	D	10	R
DHNOx	1-ply medium No Overtone clear	D	10	R
DHTS3NOx	2-ply medium No Overtone clear	D	5 + 5	R
DHTS2-x	2-ply medium-thin clear	D	7.5 + 4	
DHx	2-ply medium clear	D	7.5 + 7.5	T
TBNOx	Terry Bozzio 1-ply clear	M	10	R
SNARE DRUM HEADS				
DHA14C	1-ply medium coated	D	10	C
DHTS2-14C	2-ply medium-thin coated	D	7.5 + 4	C
DH14C	2-ply medium coated	D	7.5 + 7.5	C + T
DHA14BB	2-ply heavy coated	D	10 + 10	C
BR14C	1-ply medium coated w/ reverse dot	D	10	C + dot
TB14C	Terry Bozzio 1-ply medium coated	M	10	C
SS14T	snare-side thin clear	D	4	
SS14M	snare-side thin clear	D	5	

On the toms, I used the supplied DHTS-x thin clear heads as resonants. On the bass drum, the SWNO22 Smooth White No Overtone was used as the resonant head, with no port. I tested the snare batters with my regular snare-side heads still on, and then I tested each Attack snare-side head with my original batter back on so that I could isolate the response of the resonant head.

All batter heads were tested at their own optimal tension range. Some heads were better at certain tensions than others, so I didn't impose my own tuning preferences. Specifications and sonic findings are listed in the included table.

THE VERDICT

I was pleasantly surprised, and sometimes downright knocked out, by the sound and quality of these heads. They all tuned up very easily with minimal fuss, a sure sign that the film was correctly mounted in the hoops. Dynaflex takes a good pounding without denting easily and has nearly no break-in period. The material isn't quite as warm sounding as Mylar, and it possesses a somewhat narrower tuning range. But it does have an excellent voice with a lot of attack and good sustain.

I thoroughly enjoyed testing these heads and found some awesome sounds that I would never have heard from these drums had I maintained my prejudicial attitude toward my long-standing skins of choice. Of particular note are the No Overtone bass drum heads. Imagine an unported, unmuffled bass drum that has all the punch and attack of a kick with a ported reso head, plus a round tone and excellent rebound. If you want more overtones from your bass drum, there are other Attack heads that do offer them.

I also loved the Tone Ridge heads, which incorporate a pressed-in ridge with bonded seams near the perimeter of the head to quell overtones naturally, without the need for extraneous damping materials. If you want the epitome of fatback on your snare, there's the DHA14BB Blast Beat head, which is extra-heavy yet still fairly sensitive and maintained a fat tone throughout its medium-low to medium-high tuning range. If it's a crackin' rock snare sound you want, look no further than the powerful-sounding Bobby Rondinelli signature head. It's worth noting that Attack heads work best around the medium tuning range. Exceptions to this are noted in the table.

AND THEN THERE'S BOZZIO…

Terry Bozzio is in a class all by himself. He's an anomaly, a consummate perfectionist who can play anything, and he sports one of the biggest drumkits ever to grace a stage. When Bozzio set out to have the absolute best heads made for his kit, he sought out Attack. His signature models are constructed of DuPont Mylar S film. Per the drummer's specs, the collars of the heads are a bit deeper and sharper, to mate perfectly with the bearing edges of the drums. These heads will work well on any modern drum with relatively sharp bearing edges. They seat easily, and the deeper collar maximizes sustain.

The Terry Bozzio signature heads are not unlike the single-ply coated heads I loved using in my younger days, with super tunability, great feel and rebound, a lot of depth and dimension, and a seemingly indestructible coating. Bozzio's heads are more "uptown" than regular Attack models, which is reflected in the 33 percent higher list price.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

Perceived value can cripple your wallet, but a higher-price item is not necessarily better. Attack heads might be priced lower than the competition, but there's nothing lowbrow about them.

universalpercussion.com/attack

Comments
Resonant head. Can also be used as thin batter head. Open and punchy with no odd overtones and nice ring.
Good attack. Open, solid tone with fair amount of ring. Projects true note out front.
Good attack. Open, solid tone with more focus than clear DHAx. Projects true note out front.
Thin-Skin 2. Good attack. Open yet controlled tonality. Excellent feel. Wide tuning range.
Thin-Skin 2. Good attack. Round sounding with good focus and excellent feel. A bit darker than DHTS2-x.
Wet and punchy with thick attack. Favors medium-low to medium tuning. Tone Ridge controls ring nicely.
Excellent depth and warmth with bright attack and good amount of musical ring. Wide tuning range.
Excellent depth and warmth with solid attack and fair amount of musical ring. Wide tuning range. Solid feel.
Smooth white resonant head. Big sound. Punchy with no overtones.
Very big, solid, punchy sound with no overtones. Great attack and focus.
Thin-Skin 3. Similar to DHNOx but bigger, rounder, and a bit livelier.
Thin-Skin 2. Lots of attack and punch. Will need muffling for most applications. Great for a Bonham-type sound.
Nice "bump" and thick attack. Somewhat focused with some complexity. Tone Ridge provides good ring control.
Excellent depth and warmth with solid attack. Good focus with no overtones. Wide tuning range.
Good sensitivity and feel. Moderate musical ring. Coating has good brush response and durability.
Thin-Skin 2. Good sensitivity. Softer calf-like feel. Wide tuning range with pleasant overtones.
Excellent crack. A hint of dryness, a touch of ring, and good focus. Tone Ridge controls overtones.
Blast Beat model. Very thick and compressed sounding. Great for fatback. Sensitive with wide tuning range.
Very live sounding with good focus and sensitivity. Dot yields great impact sound. Great rimshots.
Excellent depth and warmth with fair amount of musical ring. Solid feel and excellent coating for brushwork.
Excellent snare response. Great for controlling drum resonance without darkening snare sound.
Excellent snare response. Good for controlling drum resonance and calming down an overly bright snare sound.

CYMBAL DOCTOR

CYMBAL CLEANING SYSTEM

by J.R. Frondelli

There's nothing quite like the topic of cymbal cleaning to turn a discussion among drummers into a heated debate. After all, cleanliness is next to godliness, right? Well, when you're talking cymbals, many drummers might not agree.

A GREASY MYTH

It's a common notion that the dirt and oxides that build up naturally are part of what contributes to the mellowing of a cymbal's sound. While it's true that a layer of anything extraneous will help to mellow the tone of a cymbal, a good portion of this phenomenon is due to the aging of the metal, as the tension is beat out of it under normal use.

In addition to dirt buildup and the aging of the metal, there's a third factor, called etching, that assists the mellowing process. This occurs when moisture gets into the mix, whether it's from outdoor beach gigs, dank clubs, or damp basement practice rooms. Moisture mixes with the contaminants on the cymbal surface, rendering them acidic and causing micro-etching of the metal. The point of all this backstory is to dispel the myth that good, mellow-sounding cymbals have to go unpolished. The truth is, your cymbals will mature over time no matter what. So if you want them to look clean, bright, and shiny like the day you bought them, then go for it!

CALL THE DOCTOR

For those of us who prefer some bling on our cymbal stands, there's a new and quite extraordinary cleaning system on the market called Cymbal Doctor. This system is a collaboration between Larry Jaworske, a drummer, machinist, and former custom automotive speed shop owner, and Sam Lankford, an independent chemical engineer who specializes in creating cleaning and polishing compounds for major manufacturers. After spending a lifetime creating fast, shiny speedsters that traversed New York–area roads, Jaworske decided to put his vast knowledge to use on cymbals.

From the outset you can tell that Cymbal Doctor is different from all the other cleaning systems out there. It's not a one-step panacea. In order to render a cymbal as shiny as possible, multiple steps are necessary. First, the surface contamination must be removed. Next, you polish off the metal oxide dendrites (microscopic tree-like crystal growth) sitting on the cymbal surface. This is what causes a cymbal, freshly denuded of its contaminant layer, to still appear a bit dull. Finally, the metal surface must be sealed to preserve the clean finish.

Utilizing their collective knowledge of metals and chemicals, Jaworske and Lankford went through a lengthy trial-and-error process of selecting, and ultimately creating, the correct components for their Cymbal Doctor kit. The three chemical preparations (cleaner, polish, and preservative), despite looking like some commonly available substances, are totally proprietary, even down to the foam polishing pads.

WHAT'S IN THE BAG?

Cymbal Doctor comes as a complete kit, with everything you need for the process packaged in a kitschy-yet-cool Cordura tote that looks very much like the bags carried by house-call physicians from years back. Included in the kit are an orbital polishing machine and pads; Step 1 (cleaner), 2 (polish), and 3 (sealer) chemical preparations; an empty spray bottle for water; sealer applicator pads; microfiber towels; disposable gloves (mainly to keep your hands clean, since the products are not caustic); logo-protection film; and a 24" square nonskid work pad, which keeps the cymbal in place and protects your workbench from wayward funk. An instructional DVD is included as well.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Jaworske instructed me to clean my shiniest cymbal first. I was told that the cymbal, which ended up being my prized 21" Zildjian Sweet brilliant ride, would look *better* than it did when it was new. Well, the results were astounding! My son even asked, "Hey, Dad, did you get a new cymbal?"

The real test, however, was listening to the results. The cymbal sounded much better, with a definite shimmer I hadn't heard before. This corroborates the initial findings by Jaworske, who employed a prominent New York recording studio to perform pre- and post-cleaning audiometric testing on models cleaned with Cymbal Doctor. In addition, a thermal analysis was performed to make sure that the machine-polishing system wasn't raising the cymbal's surface temperature to a point where the temper could be ruined (220 degrees Fahrenheit). The system turned out to raise the surface temperature by only a couple of degrees.

I looked through my bags for my funkiest non-brilliant-finish cymbal, and I came across a 16" Grand Master that had seen better days. I'd actually shelved the cymbal because it had lost a certain something. I've since added it back to my working rotation, as it sounds great once again after the Cymbal Doctor treatment.

THE PROGNOSIS

Cymbal Doctor works beautifully, and there simply is no better product on the market in its price range. While it's not exactly cheap ($239), it's designed to last. A single set of chemicals will clean a lot of cymbals, and refills are available for all of the chemicals and accessories. Therefore, the cost per cymbal is very low. In addition, the cleaner/brightener (Step 1) is available separately for drummers who want only to clean, but not polish, their cymbals. This preparation alone works wonderfully, with none of the etching or staining caused by other one-step liquid cleaners on the market.

cymbaldr.com

CONCERNING LOGOS...

Cymbal Doctor comes with clear plastic protective film sheets designed to be cut to shape and placed over your cymbal logos. During our testing, we found that if you go easy over the logos, you won't harm them. However, if going logo-less is your thing, you can accomplish this with Cymbal Doctor as well.

LENTO PERCUSSION

TRIPLET DRUM GLOVES AND SUPER STICKS

by Michael Dawson

Lento Percussion, operated by drummer/inventor Jimmy Lento, offers two unique products: Triplet Drum Gloves and hollow-tip Super Sticks drumsticks. We were sent samples of each to review. Here's how they fared.

TRIPLET DRUM GLOVES

Triplet Drum Gloves are made from flexible spandex and have elastic wristbands and leather reinforcements in spots where the stick makes contact with the hand. Plus they're finger-less, which allows you to maintain some tactile connection with your sticks.

The big thing that separates Triplet Drum Gloves from other drum gloves is that these incorporate three elastic straps at the key fulcrum points in the hand: between the first and second joints of the index finger, at the contact point between the thumb and middle finger, and toward the back of the hand where the ring finger and pinkie meet with the palm. A stick can be slid under one, two, or all of the straps for varying degrees of fulcrum "assistance."

With the stick placed under the index-finger strap, there's still a lot of movement to allow for swiveling French- or American-grip finger strokes. With the stick under the second strap, you're able to use a more floating, Freddie Gruber–style fulcrum (where the thumb, index finger, and middle finger form a triangle), while the third strap traps the stick closer to the palm to facilitate full, Gladstone-type wrist strokes. You can also use different combinations of straps if you want to lock the stick tighter to the hand to help prevent slippage and fatigue.

I found two immediate benefits to practicing and warming up using Triplet Drum Gloves. (I prefer to go sans gloves for all performing situations.) First, practicing with my sticks placed under each strap, one at a time, caused me to focus more intently on the three individual fulcrum points, noticing how each one caused my hand to react differently. Drum teachers could get a lot of mileage out of these gloves by using them with students to help develop proper grip. Second, the elastic straps on the Triplet Drum Gloves offer enough tension that the sticks won't fall out easily, so you can concentrate on developing a very relaxed technique. List price: $59.95 a pair.

SUPER STICKS

There's a lot of marketing hype behind Super Sticks and their unusual tip shapes. "Independent testing shows that Super Sticks are superior to ordinary nylon/wooden-tip drumsticks," the company claims. "Super Sticks are the most incredible revolution in the history of drumming and percussion." Regardless of whether or not these statements are true, or even provable, there's definitely something unique about these sticks that may pique the interest of drummers looking for a slightly different feel and sound from a drumstick.

Super Sticks are made of hickory, and their shafts gradually taper down to large, semi-hollow nylon tips. We were sent standard 5A- and 5B-size models with tapered Barrel and non-tapered Flat Top tips. The company guarantees that the tips won't break or come off during play. Even though a few of the tips on our review models were loose enough to be turned by hand, none of them came off while being tested on a practice pad, in a two-hour rehearsal with a fairly loud rock band, or in a recording session. (I did break one of the 5As during rehearsal, but the split happened at the rimshot point, not the tip.)

Because the tip is hollow, sort of like a helmet, it has more flex and bounce than a traditional nylon tip. I found that this feature made the sticks, which responded well to subtle buzz strokes as well as full-on doubles, a little lighter in the hand. The flexible tip also allows for different cymbal sounds, depending on which part you strike with. The top section produced a strong, wide attack, while the lower section could be used to create a softer, almost mallet-like response. The Barrel model had the widest timbral difference between the sections of the tip, while the Flat Top version was a bit more rigid.

I liked using the softer sound of the lower portion of the tip for washy crash-ride sections when playing with the rock band, and I can imagine symphonic/theater percussionists appreciating the ability to play mellower cymbal sounds without having to change sticks. The one thing these sticks lack is the pinpoint clarity you get from a small, solid nylon tip, and you need to be careful where you strike on the tip in order to prevent random soft/sharp attacks. Otherwise, Super Sticks proved to be a decent choice for different attack options. List price: $12.95 a pair.

lentopercussion.com

Super Sticks™ - The Ultimate Drum Stick
Barrel Tip Hickory Pro Series 5-A
Super Sticks™ - The Ultimate Drum Stick
Barrel Tip Hickory Pro Series 5-A
Super Sticks™ - The Ultimate Drum Stick
Flat Top Hickory Pro Series 5-A
Super Sticks™ - The Ultimate Drum Stick
Flat Top Hickory Pro Series 5-A

Slingerland
Radio King

by Mark Cooper

The 1936 Benny Goodman swing classic "Sing, Sing, Sing," with its primal opening tom-tom beats and furious snare drum finale, introduced a powerful and exciting new approach to drumming, which was being hammered out by the legendary Gene Krupa. Krupa's instrument of choice was the newest offering from the Slingerland Banjo & Drum Company: the Radio King.

First introduced in 1936, the Radio King line was revolutionary in that it made double-headed, tunable toms available to drummers for the first time. Krupa collaborated with Slingerland in the development of these thunderous new instruments. Soon drummers all over America were buying up Radio Kings as fast as the factory could churn them out.

Broadcaster Beginnings

The Radio King snare drums of 1936 were practically identical in design to Slingerland's 1935 Broadcaster models. (See the Collector's Corner article in the September 2010 issue of *MD* for more on the Broadcaster.) When the Broadcaster name was dropped because of trademark conflicts, Radio King was adopted. There is confusion among collectors as to what makes a drum a true Radio King. Many people assume that a solid maple shell is required, but numerous Radio Kings were assembled from 3-ply wood shells. Another misconception is that a drum must have the Speedy snare strainer and extension brackets to qualify as a Radio King. While it was designed more simply, the 1939 Buddy Rich Radio King Swingster model was equipped with the Speedy strainer, but it had no extension brackets. Radio King snares come in so many different shell and hardware combinations that there really is no one definition.

1937 Gene Krupa

1941 Hollywood Ace

1947 Super Gene Krupa

Fit for a King

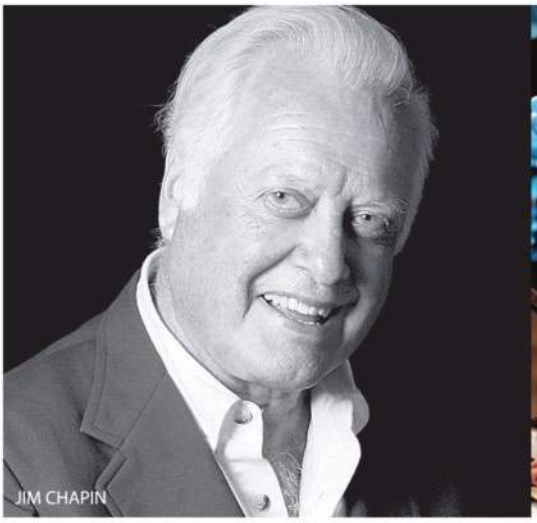
Like the Broadcaster, Radio King drums are beautiful works of art, originally available in a dazzling array of pearl and sparkle finishes. Due to the huge popularity of Gene Krupa and his gleaming white marine pearl drumset, most drummers went that route. The 1936 Slingerland catalog invites more adventurous players to "dress up your outfit in the modern way" by ordering drums in exotic colors like peacock pearl, abalone pearl, and sea green pearl. Sparkling finishes could be ordered in red, gold, silver, or green.

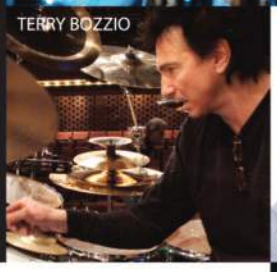
Adding even more elegance was the "full dress" treatment, consisting of tricolor diamond-shaped ornaments applied over any finish, between the lugs. The economically minded drummer also had the option of "duco" or "antique" lacquer finishes in a variety of two-tone or solid colors. All drums could be ordered with either nickel or chromium plating. The earliest models had the Slingerland Radio King name hand-engraved into the top hoop. By the late 1930s, the hoops were being stamped by machine.

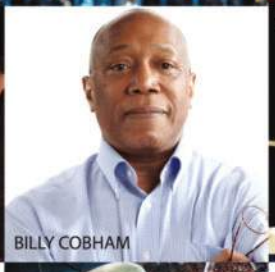
The Archetype and Its Disciples

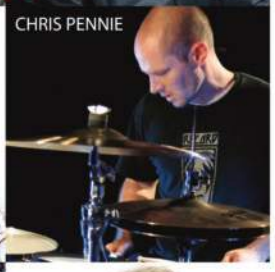
The 1936 Slingerland catalog describes the company's new Radio King snare as "The Drum That Has Everything." At the time, all Radio King snares came equipped with eight streamlined lugs, which gave the drums quite a majestic appearance. Slingerland's most popular snare during that period was the Gene Krupa model, which was designed under Krupa's specifications and was dedicated to him exclusively. The drum was offered in one size and one color, with chromium being the only plating option. Today, this $6^{1}/_{2}$x14 white marine pearl drum is considered to be the quintessential Radio King snare and is highly collectable.

The Gene Krupa model had what Slingerland referred to



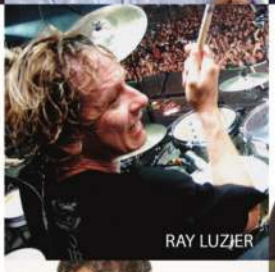


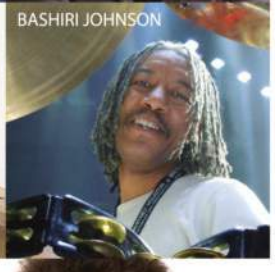


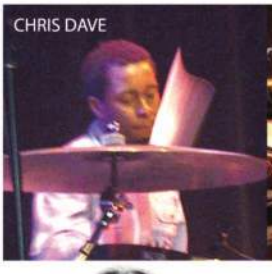


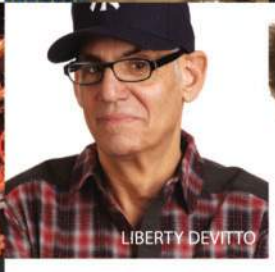
CONGRATULATIONS.

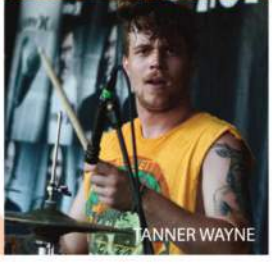
MODERN DRUMMER
Readers Poll Winners
& Nominees











SABIAN

JIM CHAPIN
Hall of Fame

MIKE PORTNOY
MVP
#1 Recorded Performance
Nightmare
(Avenged Sevenfold)
Progressive Rock

NEIL PEART
#1 Progressive Rock

JIM RILEY
#1 Country Drummer
Clinician/Educator

DAVID GARIBALDI
Educational Book
Breaking The Code

RAY LUZIER
Mainstream Rock

KEITH HARRIS
Pop

GENE HOGLAN
Metal
Recorded Performance
Dethalbum II (Dethklok)

CHRIS MCHUGH
Country

CHRIS PENNIE
Alternative

CHRIS DAVE
R&B

BILLY COBHAM
Fusion

RICH REDMOND
Country

TANNER WAYNE
Up and Coming

BASHIRI JOHNSON
Percussionist

TERRY BOZZIO
Recorded Performance
Philly '76 (Frank Zappa)

LIBERTY DEVITTO
Educational Book
Rock Solid: Drums by Liberty DeVitto

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as "a radical departure in snares and strainer assembly." The extended snare wires covered the entire bottom head and were controlled by the Speedy strainer and a pair of snare extension brackets.

Slingerland catalogs mention several other Radio King models in the 1930s and early '40s, and each one had its own special features. The Ben Pollack model was outfitted with pearl-inlaid solid wood hoops, while the Ray McKinley had a wood top hoop and a metal bottom hoop. The use of the wood hoops enabled a drummer to achieve a warmer, less metallic-sounding rimshot. A one-piece metal Radio King snare drum was also listed in catalogs for years.

Classic Sounds

Many recording engineers swear by the sound a Radio King produces. The warm, thick tone of the drum fills up plenty of space on a track. Aged wood is known for its desirable tonal qualities, and Radio Kings' nearly seventy-five-year-old maple shells, most of which were built from a solid piece of American maple with thick reinforcement hoops, have improved over the years like fine wine, giving these old drums their deep, rich sound. When tuned low with the snare tension a bit loose, the drum produces a meaty tone that's great for a heavy, satisfying backbeat. Under higher tension, the drum really sings and is capable of searing rimshots. As with any drum, each Radio King has its own sweet spot where it comes alive with the optimal tone, power, and projection.

Super Krupa Strainer and Lugs

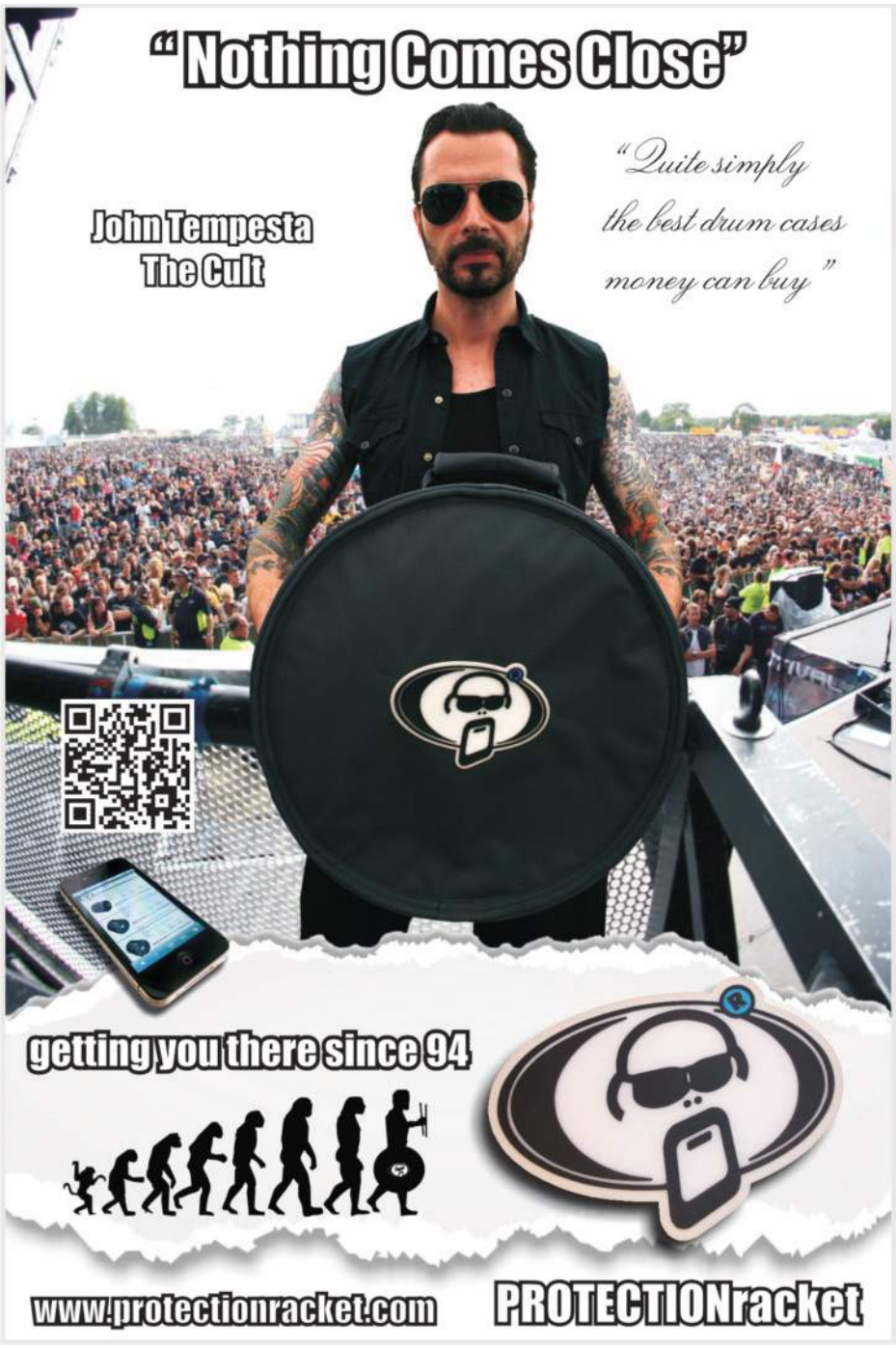
In 1940, Slingerland introduced a newly designed snare drum called the Super Gene Krupa Radio King, which had a radical departure in snare strainer design. Known to collectors as the "clamshell," this beautiful rectangular strainer had a decidedly art deco appearance. The Super strainer snare wires were attached at both ends with a single screw, eliminating the need for string. While this strainer had an attractive design and functioned quite efficiently, it has proven to be somewhat fragile, and many surviving examples often have broken handles. The Super strainer was used until 1962.

The Super Krupa snare also featured a smaller tension casing, called the Radio King Modernistic Lug. Each drum was equipped with sixteen of these new lugs, which were also available as an option on toms until 1955.

Rolling Bombers

During World War II, U.S. government metal restrictions inspired a very special Radio King. Named the Rolling Bomber, this drum was fitted with hand-carved rosewood or walnut lugs. Slingerland even designed a hand-carved wood Super strainer. The use of mostly wood parts gave these Radio Kings a warm and mellow tone. Because of the fragile nature of their components, Rolling Bomber drums are scarce and highly prized by vintage drum enthusiasts.

Slingerland's Radio King models are considered to be among the greatest-sounding drums of all time and are highly revered by players and collectors alike. Thankfully, many of them have survived, so today's drummers can continue to experience these truly legendary instruments.



Carter Beauford
POP

Terry Bozzio
RECORDED PERFORMANCE

Lenny Castro
PERCUSSIONIST

Vinnie Colaiuta
FUSION

Liberty DeVitto
EDUCATIONAL BOOK

Steve Gadd
CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR

David Garibaldi
EDUCATIONAL BOOK

Zakir Hussain
PERCUSSIONIST

Tommy Igoe
EDUCATIONAL DVD

Bashiri Johnson
PERCUSSIONIST

Glenn Kotche
ALTERNATIVE

Jason McGerr
ALTERNATIVE

Stanton Moore
CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR,
EDUCATIONAL BOOK,
EDUCATIONAL DVD

Shawn Pelton
STUDIO

Chris Pennie
ALTERNATIVE

Mike Portnoy
MVP, PROG,
RECORDED PERFORMANCE

Aquiles Priester
PROG, EDUCATIONAL DVD

Antonio Sanchez
JAZZ

Congratulations to all of our LP artists.
Modern Drummer readers think you are the best and we couldn't agree more.

LATIN
PERCUSSION

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Joe Morello

1928–2011

No one has done more to reveal the inner science and outer beauty of odd time signatures than the Dave Brubeck Quartet's beloved drummer. And that's merely one example of the profound gifts he left behind to inspire and challenge us.

by Rick Mattingly

The first image of Joe Morello that comes to my mind is of him sitting on his sofa playing on the RealFeel pad that was always perched on his coffee table. Sometimes he would be listening to his TV, sometimes he would be having a conversation with his wife, Jean, or with a visitor or caller, but the sticks would always be going. For many years, his guide dog, Matthew, would be asleep at his feet, oblivious to the polyrhythmic wonders going on a few inches above his head. People have told me that they saw Joe eat with a fork in his right hand while he kept a stick going with his left hand. I never saw that, but I believe it.

I never got the impression that Joe kept those sticks moving out of a compulsive drive to get better. It always seemed that he was just having fun doing what he loved to do. Every so often something wouldn't come out the way he wanted, so for a minute or two he would focus on his hands, playing the pattern several times until it satisfied him. Then he would get back to whatever he had been talking about—usually a great story from his years on the road—with the sticks providing a rhythmic backdrop.

By the time I met Joe in the early 1980s, he didn't need to prove anything to anybody, but he was aware of his ability to amaze other drummers with feats of speed and coordination, even if he tended to play it down. I've told this story often, so if you've heard it, skip to the next paragraph. One night when we were working on what would become his book *Master Studies*, he was talking about ostinatos. He was playing an accented 8th-note pattern with his right hand, and he said, "Once you get this happening with your right hand, you can play whatever you want against it with your left," whereupon he began to play sevens with his left hand. I could tell by the little smile around the corners of his mouth that he was showing off. Having had a long day, I just wanted to finish the section we were working on and go home. So I said, "Yeah, and while you're doing that you can play triplets with your foot." Pretending to be oblivious to the sarcasm in my voice, Joe said, "Sure, you could do that"—and he started doing it, his smile getting bigger.

As his many recordings attest, Morello was a master of time, not the

Ludwig
JM

least bit intimidated by "odd" time signatures that would confound many players. He not only handled them but made them feel so good that unless you made it a point to count and analyze what he was doing, you might not realize that he wasn't playing in 4/4.

Morello was born on July 17, 1928, in Springfield, Massachusetts. He began studying violin at age six, and three years later was featured with the Boston Symphony Orchestra as a soloist in the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto. By age fifteen he had switched to drums, first studying with a show drummer named Joe Sefcik.

"Sefcik told me about Gene Krupa," Joe said in a 1986 *MD* cover story, "so I picked up on some of his things, caught him in person a few times, and I was impressed with that. I liked the big bands and that whole thing, so I started collecting records. I listened to Basie's band with Jo Jones, and then one day I heard Tommy Dorsey with Buddy Rich. There was this blaze of triplets and this driving kind of thing that just knocked me out. I had never even heard of Buddy Rich. I started listening to more Tommy Dorsey things and researching that. So that was my main inspiration to see how far I could take it. I always felt that if one person could achieve a facility like that, anybody could."

Later, Morello studied with the legendary George Lawrence Stone. "I'd work out of his book *Stick Control*, and after I could play the sticking patterns I'd start throwing in accents in various places," Joe recalled. Stone was so impressed with Morello's ideas that he incorporated them into his next book, *Accents & Rebounds*, which is dedicated to Joe. Other variations based on Stone's exercises appeared in Morello's 1983 book, *Master Studies*. Later, Joe studied with Radio City Music Hall percussionist Billy Gladstone, one of the most technically advanced drummers of all time.

"My training was basically classical snare drum technique," Morello said. "But I used it the way I wanted to. The objective of a good teacher is to bring out the creativity of the pupil. Some teachers insist that a student play a certain style. Let the students be themselves and develop their talent. Give them a knowledge of the instrument; once they have that, they can use it the way they want to use it."

Morello started working as a jazz drummer in the Springfield area. His first professional gig was with a bandleader named Nick Denucci, who hired Joe when he was sixteen. Denucci told Danny Gottlieb that when Morello showed up for an audition—which Denucci told him was a rehearsal because he didn't want to put someone that young on the spot—he and the other band members didn't expect much. But as soon as Joe started playing, they were impressed with his swing and the way he sounded as if he had been playing for ten years. Denucci promptly hired Morello for a six-week gig. Afterward, Joe continued playing around Springfield with other local musicians, including saxophonist Phil Woods, guitarist Sal Salvador, and vibraphonist Teddy Charles.

Joe Porcaro, who grew up in nearby Hartford, Connecticut, recalls friends telling him to check out the drummer at a club called the Red Barn. "So I went down there, and it was Joe Morello," Porcaro says. "I could hear right away what a great drummer he was. Then I met him in Hartford one day when I was visiting my teacher, Al Lepak, and Al and Joe were getting together to talk about technique concepts. Joe had studied with George Stone, and a lot of people don't know this, but Joe used to go to New Haven to study with the great rudimental drummer Frank Arsenault. Lepak introduced me to Joe by my nickname, 'Skinny' Porcaro, and Joe always called me that whenever we ran into each other. Joe reminded me of Shelly Manne because he was a very witty guy—very sharp."

After touring with Glen Gray's band in 1950, Morello moved to New York City, took a cheap room at the YMCA, and started working with an impressive list of jazz musicians, including Johnny Smith, Tal Farlow, Jimmy Raney, and, briefly, Stan

Kenton. While working with pianist Marian McPartland at the Hickory House from 1953 to 1956, Morello and his technical feats attracted the attention of a legion of drummers, who would crowd around him at a back table during intermissions to watch him work out with a pair of sticks on a folded napkin. Jim Chapin told stories about unsuspecting drummers who would try to impress Morello by showing off their fancy licks. Joe would listen intently and then say, "Is this what you're doing?" as he'd play their licks back at them twice as fast.

"I know it sounds like I was being a wise guy," Morello told *MD*, "but actually I was just naive. I came to New York in awe of all these drummers I used to read about, and I assumed that they knew a lot of things that I didn't. When they would show me things, I thought that they were just playing them slow so that I could see what they were doing. I gradually came to realize that some of those people really didn't have a lot of technique."

In 1956 Joe accepted a two-week gig with pianist Dave Brubeck's quartet. He stayed for twelve years, becoming a household name in the jazz and drumming worlds. On the quartet's recording of "Take Five," Joe performed one of the most famous drum solos in jazz history.

"When people use the word *technique*, they usually mean *speed*," Morello said, commenting on the solo. "But the 'Take Five' solo had very little speed involved. It was more about space and playing over the barline. It was conspicuous by being so different."

After Brubeck disbanded the group in late 1967, Morello became an in-demand clinician, teacher, and bandleader. Danny Gottlieb, whose credits include work with Gary Burton, Pat Metheny, John McLaughlin, Gil Evans, Stan Getz, the Blues Brothers Band, and Gerry Mulligan, began studying with Morello while he was in high school. "There was a music store called Dorn & Kirschner just a five-minute walk from where I lived in Union, New Jersey," Gottlieb recalls. "I had started playing drums in 1968 and would go there to buy drumheads or sticks. One day in 1969, when I was sixteen, the head of the drum department pointed to a man who was walking up the stairs and said, 'That's the great Joe Morello. He teaches drums here.' I was more impressed that he was on the cover of the Ludwig drum catalog than that he had played with Dave Brubeck, so I arranged to take lessons from him.

"At the first lesson," Gottlieb continues, "Joe asked me to play some paradiddles. We started slowly and then got faster until I couldn't go any faster. Then I realized he was playing with one hand! He told me he was doing that just to show me what was possible.

"Joe had really studied technique, and he could spot a student's problems in a second. He never forced his method on anyone. He just gave you the option to try it, and he could explain and define every aspect of it. For example, the way you hold the sticks is based on how the hand and wrist move naturally. It was not the only way to make a stroke but the only one I had ever heard that could be defined and had a reason for every move. Joe also explained that it was not a stylistic approach and that it had no musical limits. You could apply this to legitimate snare drum, rudimental drumming, jazz, rock, whatever. I felt, and still feel, that I had found the Holy Grail of drum technique—a feeling that I believe was shared by most of Joe's students."

Morello always said that the secret to technique is relaxation. "It's a matter of natural body movement," he told *MD*. "When your hand is relaxed, your thumb isn't squeezing against your first finger and your wrist isn't at some funny angle. The stick just rests in the hand in a very natural position. When you strike a practice pad, you should be able to hear the ring of the wood stick. The average person chokes the stick, and that comes through on the drum. The whole thing is relaxation and letting the sticks do most of the work.

"Technique is only a means to an end," Morello stressed. "The more control you

have of the instrument, the more confidence you will get and the more you will be able to express your ideas. But just for technique alone—just to see how fast you can play so you can machine-gun everybody to death—that doesn't make any sense. Technique is only good if you can use it musically."

Over the years, Morello taught at various music stores in the vicinity of his New Jersey home, finally settling in at the New Jersey School of Percussion in the late '80s, where he taught until his death. Glenn Weber, who owns the combination school and drum shop, says that students came from all over the country—and the world—to study with Joe. The lessons were supposed to be an hour, but he never kept to a strict schedule. "A student would show up for a two o'clock lesson," Weber recalls, "and Joe might show up around 3:30. Then, depending on what the student wanted to accomplish, the lesson might run anywhere from forty-five minutes to two hours. And as the student was leaving, Joe would always say, 'If I can help you with anything, give me a call.' He really cared about his students."

Morello wrote several drum books, including *Rudimental Jazz*, *Master Studies*, and *Master Studies II* (all published by Modern Drummer Publications); made two instructional videos for Hot Licks, *The Natural Approach to Technique* and *Around the Kit*; and appeared in a series of videos with Gottlieb, titled *Natural Drumming* and issued by Mel Bay. He appeared on more than 120 albums, including several as a leader, the most recent of which is *Morello Standard Time*, released in 1994 on DMP. Joe won countless music polls over the years and was elected to the *Modern Drummer* Hall of Fame in 1988 and the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame in 1993.

Morello was especially close with such jazz colleagues as Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, Roy Haynes, and Mel Lewis, but he also became friends with many drummers and percussionists from other styles of music, such as longtime Metropolitan Opera Orchestra timpanist Fred Hinger and rock drummers Carmine Appice and Max Weinberg. In fact, in 1989 Weinberg arranged for Morello and Lewis to attend a Rolling Stones *Steel Wheels* concert and meet Charlie Watts, whose signature Vic Firth drumsticks are a beefed-up version of the Ludwig Joe Morello stick that Watts favored when he was starting out as a jazz drummer.

"Joe has left an amazing legacy," Gottlieb says. "We have his musical approach, which we can enjoy and analyze forever; his teachings and studies, which we can find documented in his drum books, articles, and through his students; and his love of life and his incredible personality, which lives on and inspired everyone he met along the way. Joe was my second father, and words can never adequately describe the profound impact he had on my life. At Joe's funeral service, I was amazed to discover just how many of his students, colleagues, and friends all feel the same way. Joe was a genius who changed drumming and deeply affected everyone who knew him."

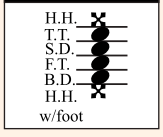
•

"Take Five"

Joe Morello's most famous recorded legacy was him in a nutshell.

Transcriptions by Steve Fidyk

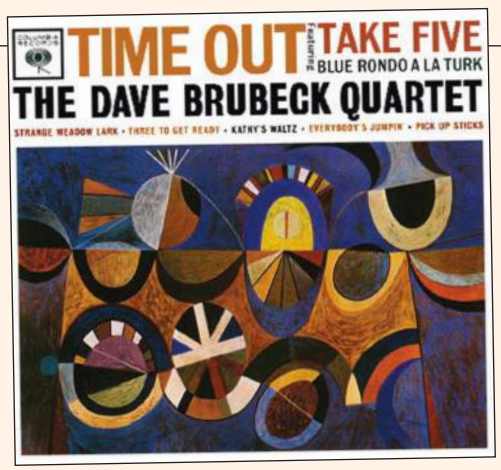
MUSIC KEY



The Dave Brubeck Quartet, with Morello, saxophonist Paul Desmond, and bassist Eugene Wright, was one of the hottest jazz groups in the country in the late 1950s and '60s, with "Take Five" even making the *Billboard* pop charts. The group was especially popular on college campuses, and people joked that with their glasses, suits, and studious looks, the members looked like college professors.

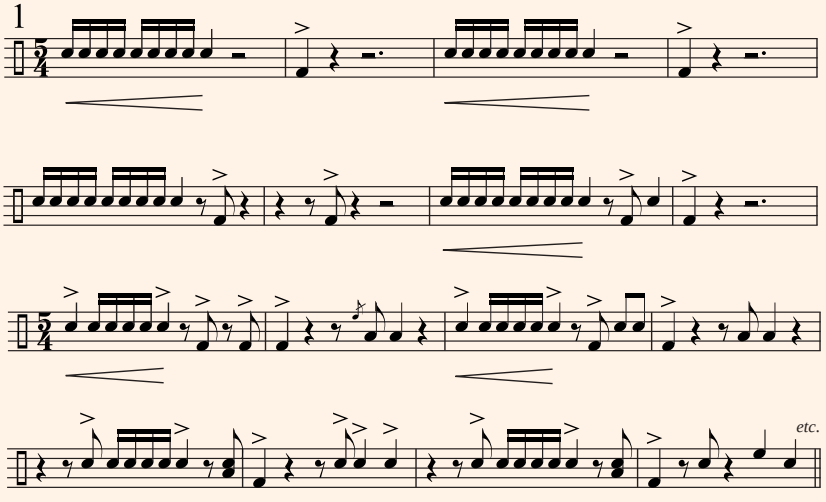
The quartet was especially known for its explorations of time signatures and rhythmic structures other than common 4/4 time. This was inspired in part by Morello's inventive and creative approach to timekeeping and improvisation. Initially, Joe was skeptical of joining the quartet when offered the drum chair, because he wanted to be featured and free to play. Brubeck thankfully agreed, and Morello was given solo space each night, during which he would superimpose polyrhythms with each of his four limbs or modulate into a new time signature. Brubeck and Desmond subsequently started writing tunes incorporating these rhythmic concepts, and the result was the album *Time Out*, which included "Take Five."

Before "Take Five," tunes written as drum solo vehicles were formulaic: Play a 4/4 melody and then let the drummer display a technical, aggressive solo until he counts the band back in. "Take Five" was unique—besides being in an odd time signature, it was accompanied by a subtle piano vamp. And rather than the expected technical fireworks, Morello built his solo on tasteful rhythmic phrases that used space or rests to help frame each musical idea.


TIME OUT
Features
TAKE FIVE
BLUE RONDO A LA TURK
THE DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET
STRANGE MEADOW LARK • THREE TO GET READY • KATHY'S WALTZ • EVERYBODY'S JUMPIN' • PICK UP STICKS

Furthermore, unlike his bebop counterparts, who favored smaller drum sizes, Morello used a standard four-piece drumset: 14x22 bass drum, 9x13 and 16x16 toms, and 5x14 snare. As you listen to and analyze Joe's work on "Take Five," pay particular attention to the "thwack" he produces on the bass drum. (He used a Ludwig Speed King pedal with a wood beater.) Also notice the crisp sound of his tightly tuned Super Sensitive snare. And check out his very melodic use of toms. Following are two excerpts from the "Take Five" solo that illustrate Joe's masterful technique and impeccable taste.

2:35

1

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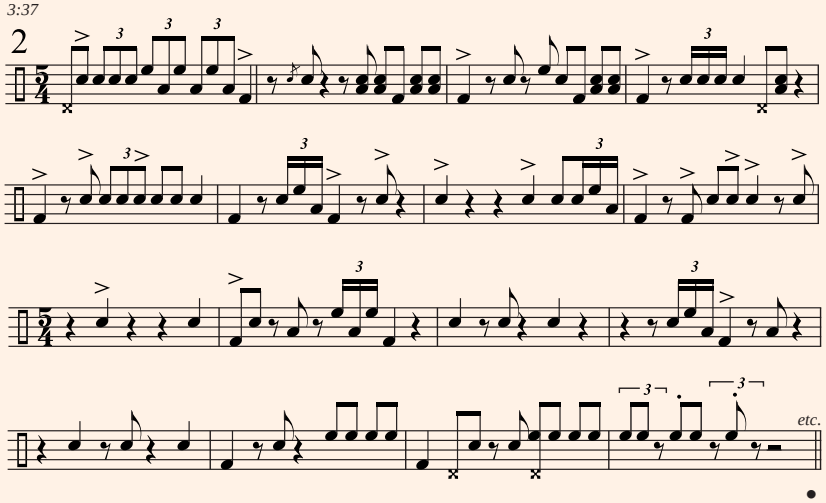

I join drummers around the world in mourning the passing of our friend, Joe Morello.

I also celebrate his historic accomplishments and his singular spirit. Joe was truly one of a kind.

Herb Brochstein

Founder,
Pro-Mark Drumsticks

© Pro-Mark Corporation.

Father Time

It will be fascinating to one day examine how Joe Morello's playing influences the way future generations of drummers think about time. But perhaps we should leave that discussion for a time further out. Today we look for insight into Morello's unique gifts from those who knew his playing, and his life, the best.

JOHN RILEY

Sometimes you interact with a person and don't realize the impact of that meeting on the course of your life until many years later.

I met Joe Morello when I was sixteen and knew immediately that he had insight into the physics of playing the drums, could guide me toward getting a more beautiful sound on the instrument, and would inspire me to gain a deeper understanding of music—exactly what I needed at that moment.

We've all been awed by Joe's amazing technical prowess—of course that's what most grabbed me as a kid—but he was also a superb accompanist. He had an amazing touch on the instrument, and his playing was infused with a unique sense of melodic development, drama, and wit.

Joe was also a most giving teacher and a mentor to drummers all over the world. He methods were very clear, the approach was firm but caring, and he was willing to share his knowledge with anyone at any time. Little did I know that my drum, and life, lessons with Joe would continue to challenge, inspire, and yield positive results all these years later—exactly what I need at this moment.

Thank you, Joe.

CARL PALMER

I met Joe for the first time in the U.K. He was performing a drum clinic in the London area, and of course I went along. It was 1969, round about—Lyceum Ballroom, Covent Garden. This was the very first time I'd seen the man in person—and *what* a player. In the town where I'm from, JM was king. He was the favorite, that's for sure. So much so, people even copied the glasses he wore. His whole deal was a very big influence on the drumming community in Birmingham, England, and that includes me!

The drum solo on a track recorded live in New York called "Castilian Drums" is still the blueprint for how we should all look at the instrument. This was history in the making.

Joe was one of the very first to deal with odd time signatures, "Take Five" by Paul Desmond being the first of many for JM to tackle, and tackle he did. Listen to the hi-hats on "Take Five" and you will see what I mean. The solo itself is devastating to this day.

Joe Morello

A giant among drummers and truly a legend in music, Joe was one of my closest friends.
He is now one of my greatest losses – few will ever compare.
– Bob Zildjian

SABIAN

In 1989 I had the great privilege of being made a member of the *Modern Drummer* Hall of Fame. So I went along to pick up my award at the MD Festival, and in my dressing room, by mistake, was Joe Morello. We talked and talked. And then the moment came when Joe and I started to practice on a pad together. It was Joe's idea. We had a great time. He then looked up and said he needed to practice more! What a great sense of humor he had.

Later that day, Joe presented me with my Hall of Fame award, which for me was an honor in the first place, because at that time most of the guys in the Hall of Fame were dead. To get it from JM was the icing on the cake.

Joe, you will always be remembered for pushing the drums into a more musical space in time—further than any of us had experienced before.

PETER ERSKINE

I bet that most of us first met Joe Morello by way of "Take Five." His effortless swing in the then-unheard-of jazz time signature of 5/4 was mesmerizing, and his melodic drum solo on the tune—a solo that owed much to traditions both old and new but stood on its own as *the* way to play musical drums—taught us all a thing or two about music and about what was possible on the drumset.

Joe Morello was *the* "modern drummer" who transitioned the music from the old to the new, from relatively obscure to the cover of *Time* magazine (Dave Brubeck's picture, anyway). His overwhelming technique never overwhelmed the music. There was more melody in one of his solos than in all of the "Old MacDonald"s and "Mary Had a Little Lamb"s put together, at least for me, anyway.

In the age of the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Sputnik, *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color*, *Davy Crockett*, and *My Favorite Martian*, *Time Out* pointed the way to a future where music ruled the spheres, art was king, and jazz was hip. Swing was cool. Joe was the thinking man's drummer, but he made the thinking man's band swing. It's simply impossible to imagine our world without his musical contributions. Thank you, Joe. I'll think of that silver sparkle Ludwig kit of yours every time I look up at the stars.

HAL BLAINE

I was very sad to hear about Joe Morello's passing. It's a huge loss…he was a friend to me. Mort Lewis, who was a fellow drummer in the early days and became a major manager at CBS for many years, managed the Dave Brubeck group in its heyday, as well as Simon & Garfunkel, Stan Kenton, and the Brothers Four. Mort and I speak at least once a month, and we always speak very fondly of Joe. I always admired his work. His legacy will live on.

BILL COBHAM

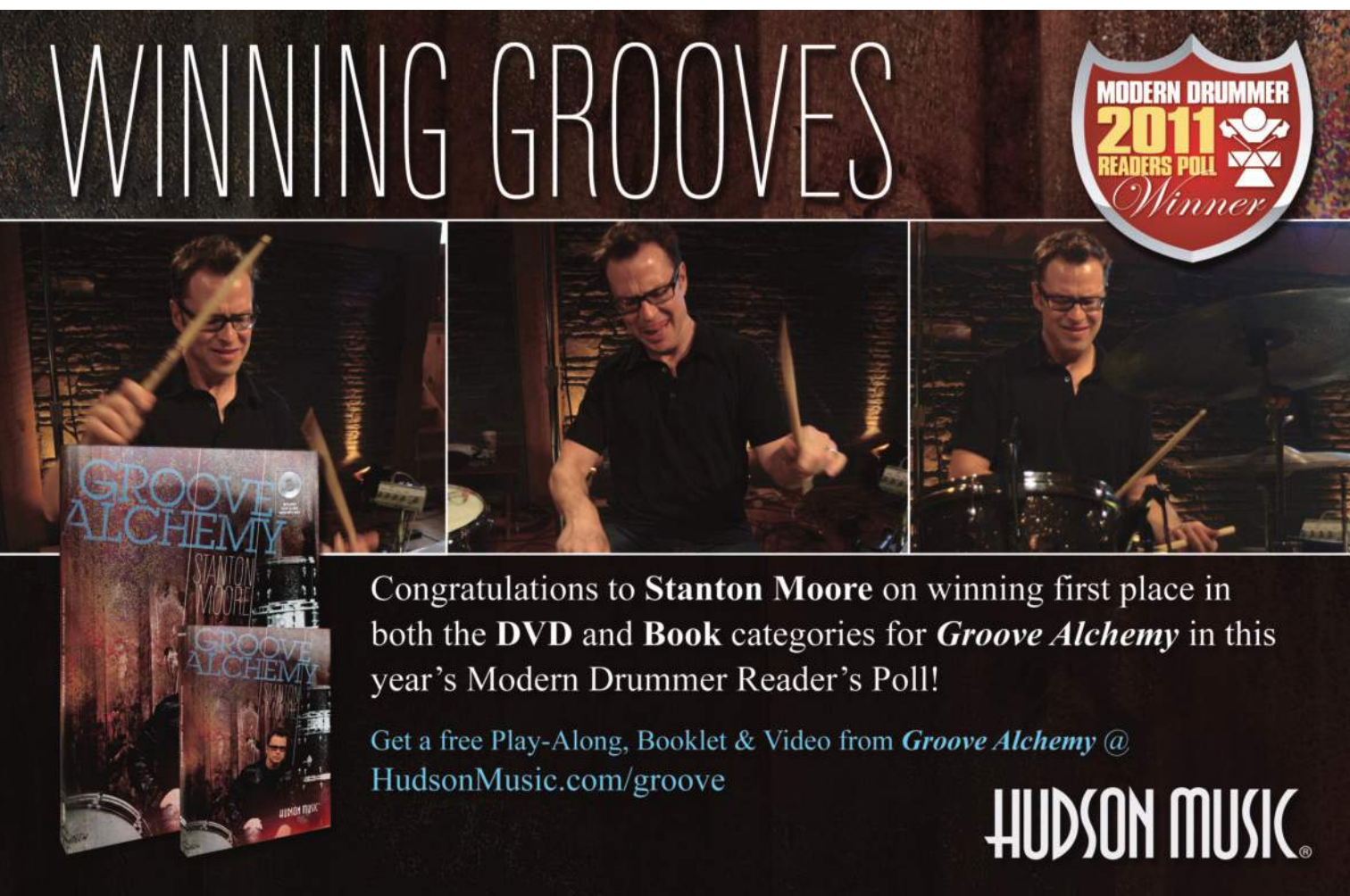
Joe represents a part of the history of modern-day drumming, much in the same way as Tony Williams, Philly Joe Jones, Louie Bellson, Buddy Rich, Elvin Jones, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Papa Jo Jones, Chick Webb, and Sid Catlett, just to name a few. Without his contribution, where would the rest of us gain inspiration?

CARMINE APPICE

Joe Morello was an idol of mine who influenced me quite a bit when I was growing as a drummer. He taught me how to do a drum clinic—and was there at my first one! We were friends since 1971. I loved and respected him as a person and as a drummer. He will be missed. I had his albums with Brubeck as well as his solo albums. I learned all about odd time signatures from Joe. He was a very giving person. He loved teaching others and was a great joke teller. I'm really sad to see him go; he was a close friend. Love you, Joe. RIP.

ROD MORGENSTEIN

Joe Morello opened my eyes to the world of jazz drumming, and odd times, *and* the realization that a drummer could be a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musician too. As a young drummer, I remember hearing "Take Five," "Blue Rondo à la Turk," and "Unsquare Dance" and being completely mesmerized by how rhythm could be manipulated in so many interesting ways and by the realization that drumming in these challenging settings could sound so effortless and musical.

And then there was "Far More Drums," Joe's incredible solo in 5/4—weaving his way through some of the most complex rhythmic patterns and playing with the utmost of musicality, not to mention incredible independence, as shown by his perfectly placed ostinato hi-hat pattern on beats 2 and 4. I am so glad to have had the opportunity to meet and talk with Joe on several occasions, including at several Modern Drummer Festivals. He was always down to earth, warm, and engaging. Joe Morello brought a rare elegance to drumming—a classy, often understated (despite his incredible chops!) approach to playing music, which we can all learn a great deal from.

BILL BRUFORD

Joe was one of the three pillars of the drum world that got me into it in the first place—the others being Max Roach and Art Blakey. Joe had the odd-time thing, of course, which I sort of inhaled and brought over to the progressive rock we were doing. Like everyone else, I spent hours with his book *Master Studies*, hunting for the magic ingredient that would give me just something of his lightness of touch, his wicked turn of speed, or his effortless dynamic control. If I peered into the pages long enough, maybe some of it would rub off.

There was a little bit of Joe in all my playing, studio or stage. I had a lot of fun recording a version of his classic showcase 5/4 solo from the Brubeck group's "Far More Drums," rebranded as "Some Other Time," on my CD *If Summer Had Its Ghosts*. We went to town trying to re-create that huge Columbia Studios drum sound of the original.

Sadly, I never met Joe, but I wouldn't have known what to say anyway. A simple "thank you" would have seemed woefully inadequate for all the hours of pleasure and inspiration he gave me.

PAUL WERTICO

Although I only had the pleasure of meeting Joe a couple of times, I remember him being a really sweet person. The first time I saw Joe perform live is an experience that I'll never forget—and one that I often tell to students.

It took place one afternoon in 1968, in Chicago's Grant Park. Bill Crowden's Drums Unlimited was presenting a free afternoon drum festival that featured a great lineup, including Joe Cusatis, Sheldon Elias, Barrett Deems, Elvin Jones, and Joe. Joe was in the middle of playing a burning solo when all of a sudden a tom head broke. But instead of stopping his solo, he continued on by playing an unbroken, steady stream of triplets on the snare drum with his left hand, while at the same time he got out a drum key with his right hand, removed the broken tom head, replaced the head with a new one, tuned it, and then played the rest of his solo! Of course the crowd went absolutely crazy, and since I was just a kid at the time, as you can imagine, my mind was completely blown.

MIKE PORTNOY

I am truly saddened to hear of the passing of Joe Morello. Joe's drumming with the Dave Brubeck Quartet was my first introduction to odd time signatures, when I was a pre-prog teen. "Blue Rondo à la Turk" in particular was a huge inspiration to me in learning how to count odd meters in music.

ROBERT ZILDJIAN

What a great loss for us all. Joe was one of the greatest drummers but equally one of the nicest people in our business.

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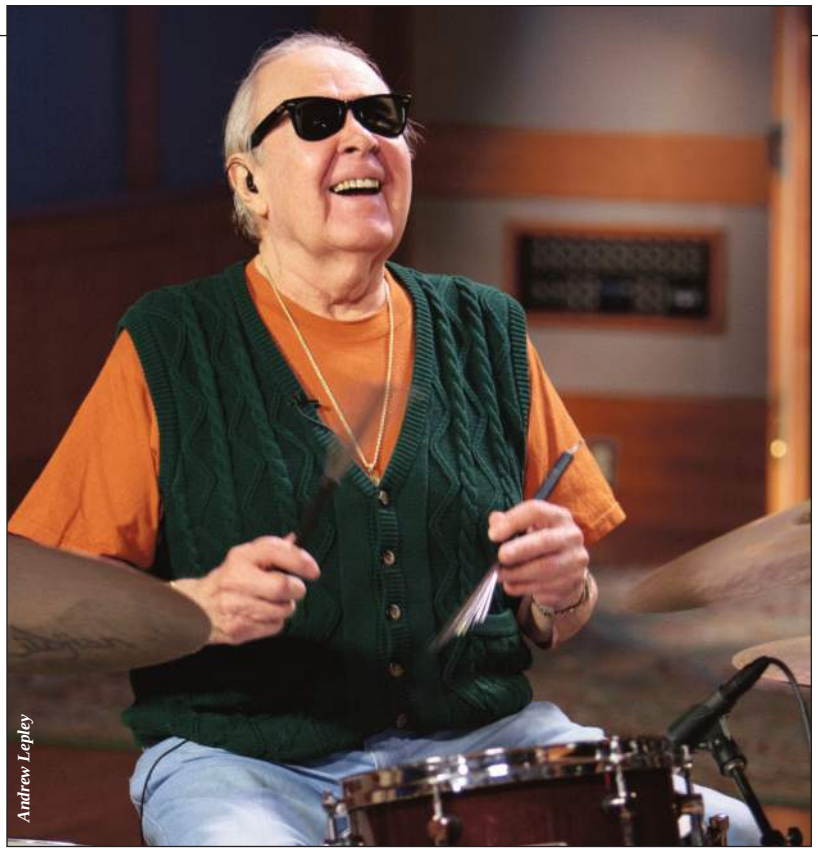
Andrew Lepley

I knew him when, as a boy, he'd ride the earliest bus from Springfield to Boston to take lessons from George Stone. He was so in love with drums, he'd hang all day in George's store—to such an extent that George called me to see if Joe had a good home and any other interests!

Marian McPartland was his first famous gig. I well remember Joe and Bill Crow being coached, inspired, and chewed out by Marian—one of the best of all teachers—at the old Hickory House on 52nd Street.

Joe called me about whether to play with Benny Goodman, who loved his technique but couldn't accept his poor vision, precluding Joe from mastering constant new arrangements.

When he tied in with Dave Brubeck, he finally received the recognition he deserved. The blending of Dave and Paul Desmond lasted for years, and it pushed Joe to the top of the *DownBeat* poll several times.

Throughout his whole time with me, Joe was forever modest, cooperative, and knowledgeable, always fun to be with, always a close, close friend. I shall dearly miss him, and so will the whole drumming fraternity.

DAN BRUBECK

Through a stroke of pure luck, the first drumming I consciously witnessed was Joe Morello's. He started playing in the Dave Brubeck Quartet in 1956, when I was only one year old, and played in my dad's group until 1967. By that time I was all of twelve and was a drummer recording and performing in my own right, thanks to his influence. Joe inspired me to play drums and sparked a fascination that has lasted my whole life. As a child I was taken by the flash of his Ludwig silver sparkle drums and the patchwork of destination stickers on his drum cases. He was an adventurer of both the globe and the musicality of rhythm. Joe Morello is part of the landscape of my fondest childhood memories.

I can't help but smile when I think of the utterly cavalier attitude Joe had when he played—like a confident gunslinger with the assuredness that he has the world's fastest hands. Joe could play any tempo and solo in any time signature with authority, grace, and ease. It seemed there was no limit to the musical thoughts he could execute with complete precision. He amazed me with his rare ability to verbally analyze the music that flowed through him. His soloing was an incomparable mix of melodic phrases that he played with blazing chops combined with rhythmically explosive expression. Joe Morello brought a whole new dimension to the art of jazz drumming, and I am eternally grateful to have known him.

SUSIE IBARRA

I'm very grateful for the contribution and great artistry Joe Morello gave all of us with his amazing drumming. His musicianship as a rhythm section player and soloist was really beautiful. I especially love his solos on "Take Five" with Dave Brubeck, how melodic, hypnotic, and masterfully rhythmic they are. I also love his brushwork and his left-hand rolls. He will be missed. Our condolences to his loved ones.

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DAVE KING

There is no anomaly bigger than a drum solo from a song in 5/4 time being a hit with the ladies. If you are the person who achieved that, you left a serious mark in music. I am a real fan, and I dream every night of making a contribution that size to the drum world. Thank you, Joe Morello, for the inspiration!

ALLISON MILLER

Joe Morello will be greatly missed. He was an inspiration, both musically and technically. His percussive precision and controlled execution around the drumkit set the bar for rudimental prowess around the world. Morello also blessed the worldwide drumming community with the greatest gift of all: *Master Studies*. This book, specifically the Accent Studies and Table of Time sections, changed my life. Thank you, Joe, for generously sharing your knowledge and wisdom. I hope we continue to pass along your lessons to future generations, just as you passed along the lessons of your teacher George Lawrence Stone.

JEFF DAVIS

Where would we be without Joe Morello with Brubeck doing "Take Five"? Would we have ever figured it out, as simple and as plain as Joe displayed? And his solos always led us down a path of beautiful complexity in math, vibe, rhythm, and melody.

I had the wonderful opportunity to meet Joe at West Orange Music many years ago. Oftentimes I would go up there and just hang around the store and the studio, whenever I knew he was coming by. He even taught lessons there for a while, off and on.

Joe Morello, the innovator, was always kind and generous, and even in sickness he still had an incredibly sensitive touch on the drums. Unforgettable.

BOB GATZEN

Joe Morello was my inspiration to play the drums. At nine years old I played the accordion and at ten the trumpet. Then one night my dad took me to the Bushnell Memorial Theater in Hartford, Connecticut, to see the Dave Brubeck Quartet. We had front-row seats, and I could not stop looking at Joe Morello sitting behind his silver sparkle Ludwig drumset. The last tune they played was "Take Five," on which Joe played an extended drum solo. At the end of the show, as we were walking out of the theater, I said, "I am going to be a drummer, Dad," and the rest is history.

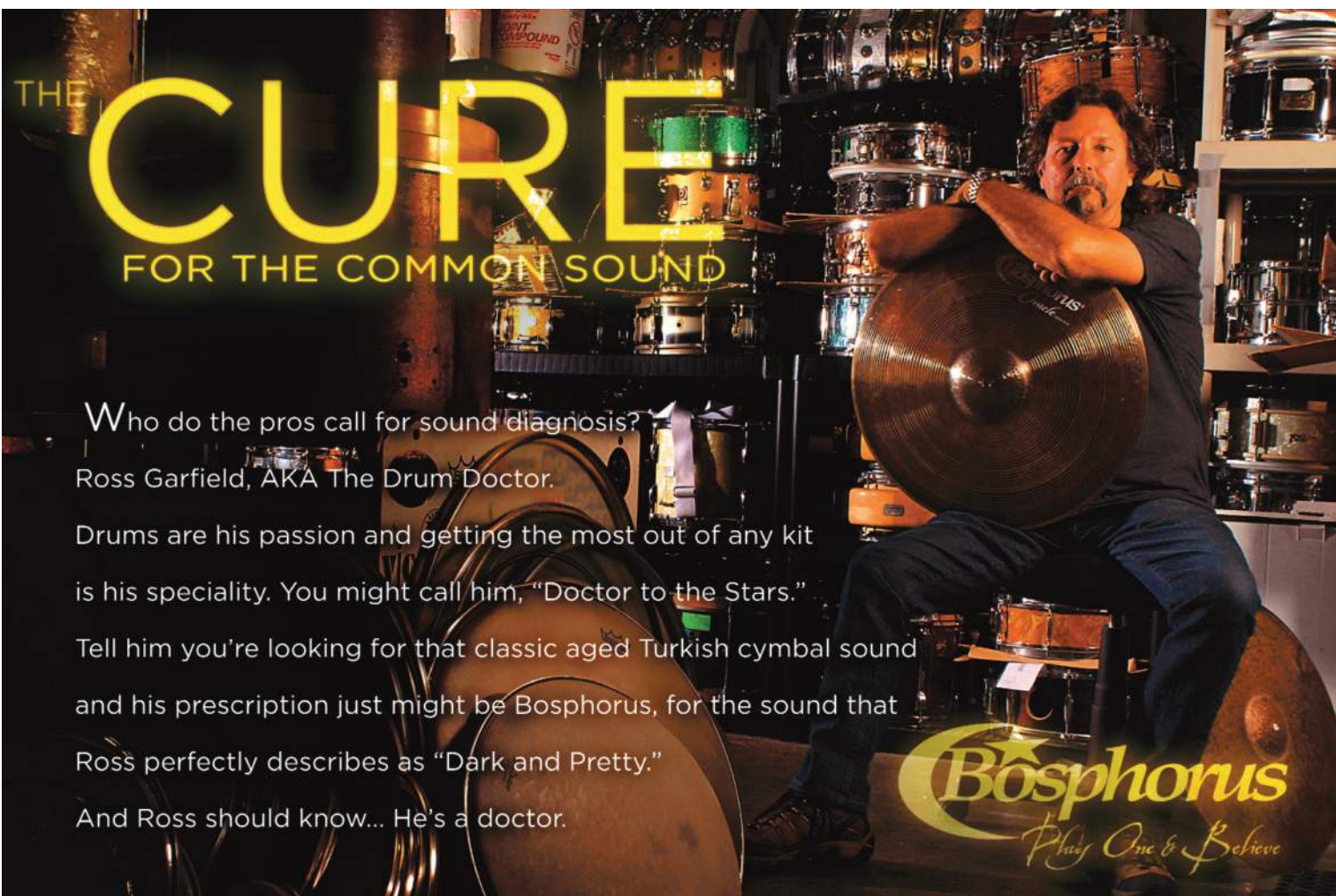
Many years later, we attended the Modern Drummer Fest after-show dinner, and we were lucky enough to have Joe sit at our table. He was talking about the loss of his beloved seeing-eye dog, and since my wife, Jo-Ann, is involved with dogs, they formed an instant friendship and talked dogs all night long. Joe will be greatly missed by both of us.

JASON BITTNER

Joe Morello was an absolute master drummer, hence the title of his famous book. His work with Dave Brubeck was some of the first killer jazz playing that I became aware of. I always wanted to study with Joe, after seeing his ads in *MD*, but unfortunately, due to my touring and recording schedule over the last decade, I never got the chance. Joe's music and legacy will live on forever in the hearts of many drummers, and we will all miss him.

JIM RUPP

NAMM did an oral history with Joe several years ago. You can check out a taste of that at namm.org/library/oral-history/joe-morello. Hearing him speak brings back his wit and grace. What a gem, and what a musical drummer—chops and taste combined. That's a rarity.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JOE VITALE

What a great loss in the drum world. I won a free lesson with Joe Morello when I was in high school. He taught me so much in that half hour that I'll never forget that day and how great he was. RIP, Joe—now you're keeping great time for God!

RICK LATHAM

Joe was the first drummer I ever saw do a clinic, and as a young boy of about twelve years old, I was inspired to no end. He played a concert with the Brubeck Quartet the same night. Awesome. I met him that afternoon backstage, and we remained friends all these years.

Some years later, the first time I met Louie Bellson, Louie and I played a little together, and Louie said to me, "You know, Rick, your left hand looks like Joe Morello's." The first time I saw Joe, he played his famous left-handed single-stroke roll on my pants leg. I guess the picture of his technique stayed with me subconsciously. Glad it did!

A great man, musician, and friend. He changed drumming forever and will always be remembered through his music, incomparable style, and technique. Love ya, Joe.

ADRIAN VALOSIN

I studied with Joe Morello every Saturday for three years. When I started, I was twenty and he was forty-two. We became good friends; he was my best man when I got married.

All the video material on Joe clearly shows his love for the drums, his love for discovering, and his passion for sharing his findings while holding no "secret" technique from us. All of that made him a very, very good teacher.

Here's a sampling of his great teachings:

"I teach to eliminate myself."

"I won't always be around, so you can take what I'm showing you and teach yourself."

"I don't want you to play like me—that would be a drag!"

"When you start to get some notoriety, people will be attracted to you. Be kind."

"When you start to make some money, you're going to think you've arrived and that it'll be like this forever. When you make some money, save some of it. And enjoy all you're experiencing—nothing lasts forever."

"When you're on the pad, that's the speed bag. When you practice on the set, that's sparring. When you're on the gig, forget all that and just listen. What you're working on will creep into your playing all by itself, so don't worry about it."

I called Joe a few months ago. We talked for over an hour. He wanted details about what I was doing. I told him I often get comments on my touch, or feel, or how relaxed I seem to be when I play, yet no one has ever guessed me to be his student. He enjoyed that. He told me to come up when the weather gets better and asked who I'm studying with. I said, "Still you, Joe!"—just like he taught us.

Joe, my thoughts are with you and Jean. Love, Adrian.

STEVE FIDYK

Joe Morello was a kind and humble human being. He would always take time to stop and talk to a person that he'd just met and make them feel special. To me, his drumming was elegance personified. His time feel, consistent sound, and reflex action were like no other. As a teacher, he loved sharing his experience, and he worked tirelessly to instill values in each of us. I feel so blessed to have known him and to call him my teacher. Humanity lost one of its pillars when Joe Morello passed. I send my deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to his wife, Jean.

RICK VAN HORN

I'm terribly saddened by the passing of Joe Morello. I knew Joe well through my years at *Modern Drummer*, and we were on the faculty of several KoSA percussion workshops together. But more than that, Joe was the first drum clinician I ever saw. I was only twelve, but the impact he had on me that day has remained with me throughout my career. As a person, Joe was a gentle and witty man. In the drumming world he was a giant whose legacy will remain for generations to come.

DOUG KASSEL

It was only through Joe's encouragement, inspiration, friendship, and support that I even dreamed I could become a drummer. He made the impossible look easy and fun, with immense amounts of technique, taste, musicality, and humor. One of the all-time legendary masters of the instrument, as well as my childhood hero and friend. I cannot imagine what my life would have been had he not been a part of it. I have great memories. He will be missed. Thanks for everything, Joe.

Andrew Lepley

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deftones' ABE CUNNINGHAM

It took a tragedy to make the members of **Deftones** stop their bickering and get back to the business of making music. Still, the band's drummer reveals that some things—good and bad—never change….

Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Ashley Maile

You play drums in a California alternative metal band whose members are constantly at war, and all the while you watch your albums consistently climb the charts. You tour the world, engaging in behavior you probably shouldn't, enjoying extracurricular activities that many groups wear as a badge of honor. You love Stewart Copeland, Lars Ulrich, and Stevie Wonder, yet your band insists you bash an open 4/4 hi-hat much of the time. You settle for band peace over personal creativity. Then one day it all changes.

In 2008, Deftones were recording an album to be titled *Eros*, a work of atmospheric melodies, delirious Pro Tools soundscaping, experimental arrangements, and dark urges. Drummer Abe Cunningham, guitarist Stephen Carpenter, vocalist and guitarist Chino Moreno, keyboardist/turntablist Frank Delgado, and bassist Chi Cheng were making real progress. This was no typical Deftones album—the band had matured since its previous release, *Saturday Night Wrist*, and was experiencing some of the best growth of its nineteen-year career. The guys were becoming friends again.

Then, on November 4 of that year, Cheng was critically injured in a car accident in Santa Clara, California. Deftones halted recording, stopped everything while waiting for their fallen comrade to return. But Cheng's coma never lifted; the bassist never regained consciousness. Deftones put the wraps on *Eros* and took a long, well-deserved break. Slowly, tentatively, the band reconvened in the studio to make music, to talk, to pray for Chi. Joined by former Quicksand bassist and friend Sergio Vega and producer Nick Raskulinecz, the group recorded *Diamond Eyes*. In doing so Deftones found a new lease on their life, their friendship, and their band.

Traveling in Germany on a recent global tour, Cunningham spoke with *MD* about life after Cheng's accident, the aborted *Eros* album, and Deftones' recent return to form.

MD: What's the latest on Chi?
Abe: He's making progress, but it's extremely slow. He's still unable to communicate, which is the worst situation I can imagine someone being in. We go to see him and he looks at us, but there's a blank stare. I think he's aware of what's going on, but he's not able to verbalize it. There's all kinds of love coming from around the world, but it's difficult when Chi needs funding. He's not getting it from his insurance; they don't cover everything he needs. Here we are more than two years later, and I'm just waiting for my brother to return.
MD: How would you compare *Eros* with *Diamond Eyes*?
Abe: It's more experimental and spacey. Our past few records were extremely difficult to make. We made things hard on ourselves. On *Eros* we really focused on being friends again. We were like a dirty cymbal; we needed some Brasso and elbow grease to bring out that shine again.
MD: How did the band finally decide to move forward?
Abe: We took a couple months off to figure some things out. Then we decided to go back in our rehearsal spot and bash it out. We just needed to get back together and play some music. That was very cathartic. We had a show booked, and that's when Sergio came into the fold. He'd subbed for Chi before. We were big fans of his old band, Quicksand. So he was the only person we had in mind. We started jamming, and after two days we'd written a couple songs, including "Royal," which ended up on the album. Then we never looked back.
MD: What's the major difference between Chi's and Sergio's time feel?
Abe: We were seriously influenced by Quicksand, so it was a natural, easy fit. Chi was a finger player, but Sergio plays with a pick, so that tightened things up a lot. Chi was also more behind the beat, which was his trademark.

Sergio had a lot of material to learn too. He made us step up on a lot of levels. He made us pay attention to our older songs, and that brought us all together as a band.

MD: Producer Nick Raskulinecz also helped you free up your drumming for *Diamond Eyes*, right?

Abe: The recording process was a breeze. Nick was always air drumming around the studio with sticks. We called him "Man Who Walks With Stick." We would just jam. In the past we thought we could just sit in the studio and write for months. But that didn't always work and was very expensive. Nick had us set up eight-hour days. We had a schedule. He'd be behind me sometimes—it was driving me nuts! But I'd look back and he'd be grinning. That was freeing. He let me be me. He would record every day during preproduction and take the tracks home, so he'd have eight hours of us jamming. The next day he would point out parts, and we'd get down to it.

MD: And the band recorded to a click?

Abe: In the past when we weren't speaking to each other, like on *Saturday Night Wrist*, someone would just lay something down with a click. That was the peak of our hatred for one another. This time we were a band again, so we tracked to a click and used tempo maps, but without piecing things together. We're a band—we can play.

MD: How have your drum parts changed now that you're back on the road?

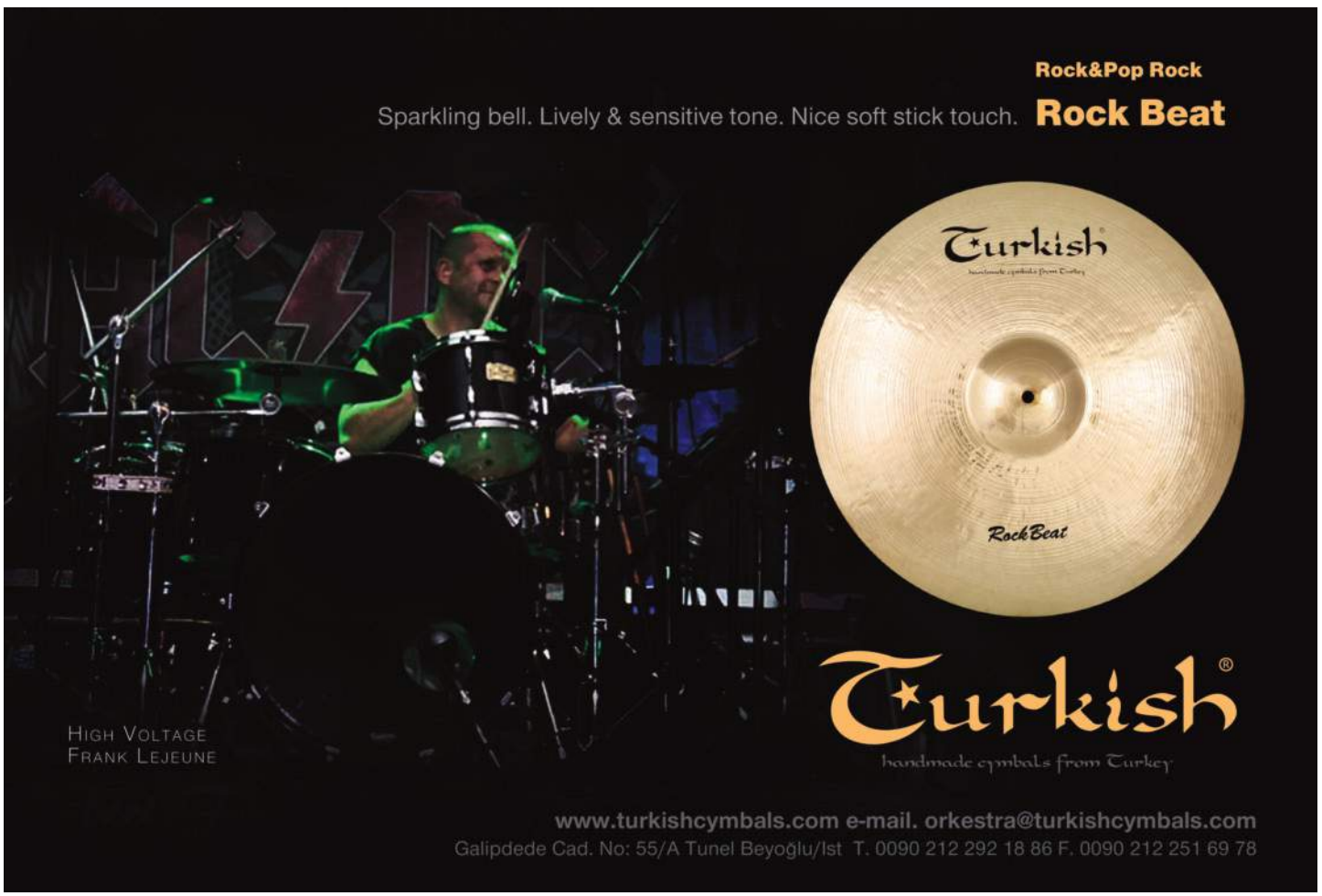
ABE'S SETUP

Drums: Tama Starclassic Bubinga in blue sparkle finish, including 7x12 and 7 1/2x14 toms, 15x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and a 20x22 bass drum, plus a 6 1/2x14 Starphonic brass main snare and a 7x13 Starclassic maple side snare

Cymbals: Zildjian, including 15" A Custom Mastersound hi-hats, a 22" A Custom ride, 19" and 20" A Custom crashes, 10" and 12" A Custom splashes, and an 18" Z Custom China

Heads: Remo, including Coated Emperor snare batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, Clear Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and a Powerstroke 4 bass drum batter with a Falam Slam patch

Sticks: Pro-Mark Abe Cunningham TX916W Autograph model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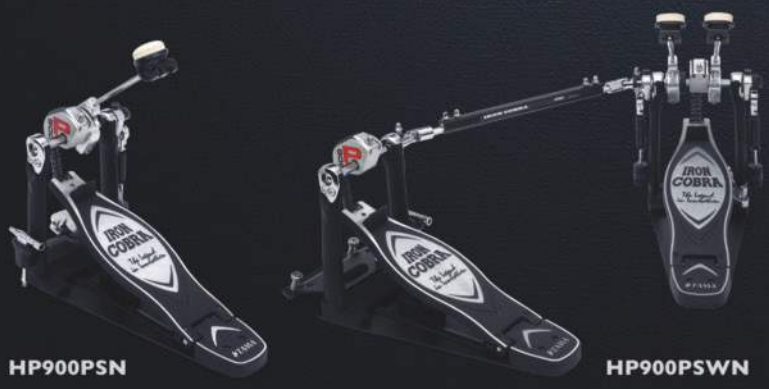

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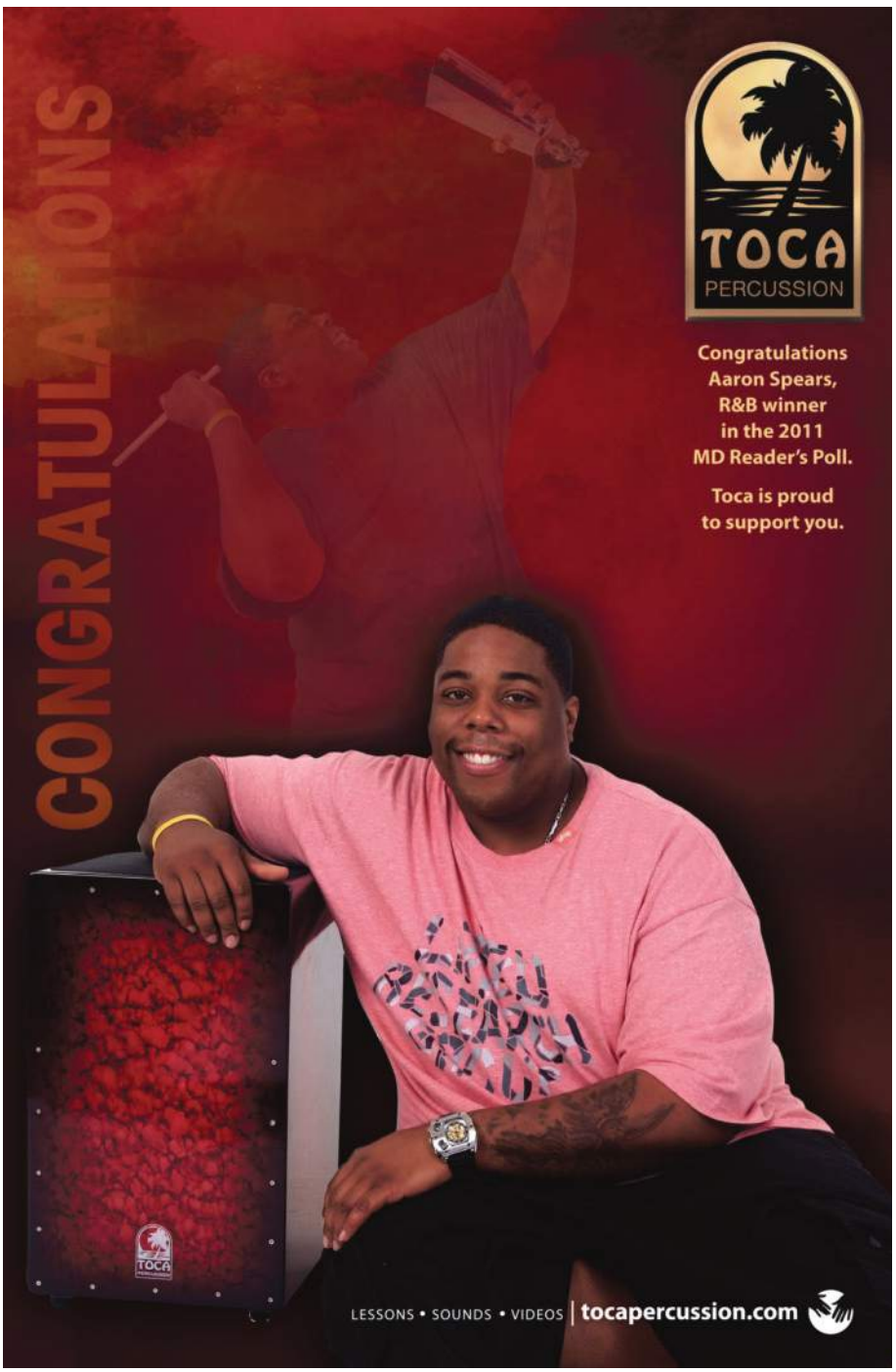
Abe: I believe that you should be allowed to expand your parts, but our guitarist Stephen is of the mind that it must be exactly like the record. This has been our battle for years. Signature fills need to be there, but there's always room for growth. My parts have stayed pretty much the same, though the songs do take life after they've been recorded.
MD: Has anything changed?
Abe: Really just getting the body back after being off the road for a couple years. Getting my calluses back and losing the gut from sitting at home. We're leading a healthier lifestyle now. Better food, nice wine rather than vodka. I think my two hours of drumming a night is plenty of exercise; the other guys go to the gym every day. You can make things easier or make things harder on yourself. We've grown up.
MD: What's your pre-gig warm-up?
Abe: We're out with Coheed and Cambria. Now, that boy, Chris Pennie, has a pad with him at all times. That's encouraging. I try to keep loose all day, but then I play basic rudiments on the pad for thirty minutes before the show. I play along to the music the crowd is hearing between bands. I jam out to that on the pad, keep the blood flowing, keep it loose.
MD: What are your living quarters like on the tour bus?
Abe: We each have our bunk and a wardrobe case. I've learned to travel light. I used to lug everything around the world and then never use it. We've got personal TVs, and we can slam the curtain shut if need be. The U.S. buses have front and back lounges, and the European double-deckers have three lounges, so it's really nice. But no TVs in the European bunks!
MD: Do you sleep well on a tour bus?
Abe: I crave it when I'm home. But I'm a light sleeper and I sleep horribly on the bus. It's a long drive sometimes, and usually when the bus pulls over for fuel or food, that's when I crash. But I generally toss and turn all night long. I use earplugs so I don't hear these fools snoring around me.
MD: On "Prince," from *Diamond Eyes*, you play a Stewart Copeland–type groove, with ska figures on the hi-hat. What were you thinking there?
Abe: I am Copeland's biggest fan; that's just in me. I was trying to keep it going, keeping the hi-hats on the upbeats, which is very driving. Trying to keep it simple and fun. I keep that same part on the road; that song is very dialed in. I was listening to the album the other night and realized we'd really raised the tempo. So we brought it back down, addressed the exciting tempo leap. It's a fun song to play.
MD: Was the tricky coordination between the bass drum and hi-hat in that song tough to master?
Abe: It was a kick in the ass at first, but like anything you do over and over, it gets a bit easier. You get the muscles firing right.
MD: Are we hearing mostly live drum takes on the album?
Abe: We go through and get a couple good passes, and we do a final free-for-all, not worrying about time or fills—just go for it. That's always fun. You know you have the main part there,



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and then you just whip it out and see what you can snag. We go for feel, and hopefully we get that in a couple passes.

MD: Do you play at the same volume level live and in the studio?

Abe: I hit pretty hard, always have. But over the years I've learned that you can only hit a drum so hard. You need to let the mics do the work. Take a deep breath and ease back.

MD: Your drumming has a great sense of flow, which is not always the case in metal.

Abe: It's something I'm constantly working on. It's just being more comfortable, and time and age play a part in that. Just being more at ease and knowing when to kick it in and when to lay back. I guess we're a metal band, but I'm not a metal drummer. I can't play double bass. I just come at it differently. I think of myself as a groove player, just trying to make it sound the best I can.

MD: The open hi-hat bash is a constant in your style. Is that to fill more space within the bar?

Abe: That's funny. Getting back to Stephen, our guitarist, whenever I would tighten something up he'd say, "Let it sizzle!" These little battles have been going on for years. The open hi-hat thing developed from that. Maybe it helps fill up the music.

MD: Where on the stick do you strike the open hi-hat?

Abe: With the shaft, the upper inch or two near the bead. And with my left hand I'm mostly playing rimshots on the snare. My main snare is pretty tight, but I have a secondary snare on the left, which has more of the big, fat, loose, ugly sound. That's another battle I've had over the years with Stephen. He loves that cranked snare. But after a while it hurts to play and it drives me crazy. So I put the other snare up on the left to give myself some options. On some songs it's the

RECORDINGS

Deftones Adrenaline, Around the Fur, White Pony, Deftones, Saturday Night Wrist, Diamond Eyes, Eros (unreleased)

INFLUENCES

Jimi Hendrix Experience Axis: Bold as Love (Mitch Mitchell) /// **Stevie Wonder** Songs in the Key of Life (Greg Brown, Raymond Lee Pounds, Stevie Wonder) /// **The Police** Zenyattà Mondatta (Stewart Copeland) /// **Judas Priest** Sad Wings of Destiny (Alan Moore) /// **The Beatles** Rubber Soul (Ringo Starr) /// **Bad Brains** ROIR cassette (Earl Hudson) /// **Pink Floyd** Atom Heart Mother (Nick Mason) /// **Metallica** ...And Justice for All (Lars Ulrich) /// **Funkadelic** Standing on the Verge of Getting It On (Gary Bronson, Tyrone Lampkin, Ramon "Tiki" Fulwood) /// **Rush** Moving Pictures (Neil Peart)

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primary snare.
MD: Do you sit high or low in relation to the snare drum?
Abe: Pretty high. My first drumkit was my dad's Ludwig set with a 24" kick drum and an 8" [deep] snare. I was seven when I began playing, so I had to sit high. Now I sit pretty much even, maybe a bit up from the snare but basically level. I like to be on top of things.
MD: On "Risk," are you playing with one hand or alternating hands on the hi-hat?
Abe: Alternating during the verses. Just for a quick flip on that. On that song we tracked it to a tempo map, and we raised the tempo one bpm in the verses. We did constant adjustments. Now we can just kick it up at will. In the past when we would kick it up we'd end up knocking it back a couple notches too, keeping it elastic.

There's a song on the new album called "Beauty School," and the choruses are way more laid back than the verses, where you'd think maybe we'd kick it up a couple bpm instead. We went through everything during the preparation for making the record. We had a lot of room to experiment. There are three or four different tempos in pretty much every song. Of course, live you get excited and things leap up a bit. I pay more attention to that now than I ever have. But just getting people on the same page, it's not always easy. Sometimes people are in different places, and we've been together for twenty years. We're always thinking about the next record.
MD: How do you stay amused on the road?
Abe: GarageBand is such a fun, cool way to write music. And the apps on the iPhone are great, just the simple mic for keeping ideas. It's a great time now in terms of that kind of recording ease. At the same time, I like an old boom box that you put a towel over to cut out the highs in the rehearsal room. I like to lay things down in GarageBand, and then I can communicate them to the band.
MD: How did you personally handle the tragedy that happened to Chi? How did you get back on track?
Abe: I have two sons, so I enjoyed spending time with them and going about normal things. I've spent so much time on the road, so being with the kids and watching them smile and seeing them be happy was incredibly gratifying and soothing all the way around. During the time of Chi's accident it was nice to be grounded and normal. And there was always music around to help—Stevie Wonder. But my friend is not around now, and that kicks me in the rear end and makes me appreciate all the opportunities I have: health and happiness, family, the good things in life.

For those interested in contributing to a fund that has been set up for Chi Cheng, go to oneloveforchi.com. The site also updates Cheng's situation.

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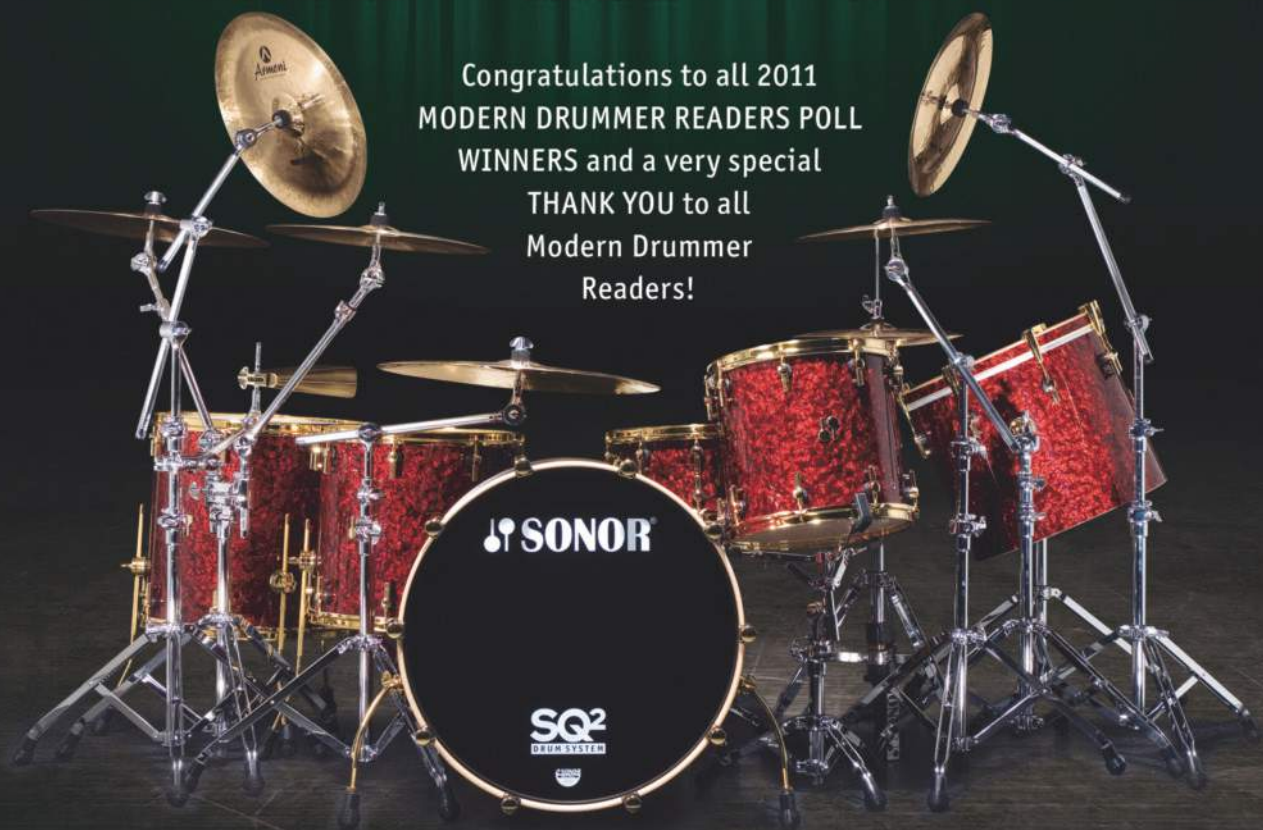

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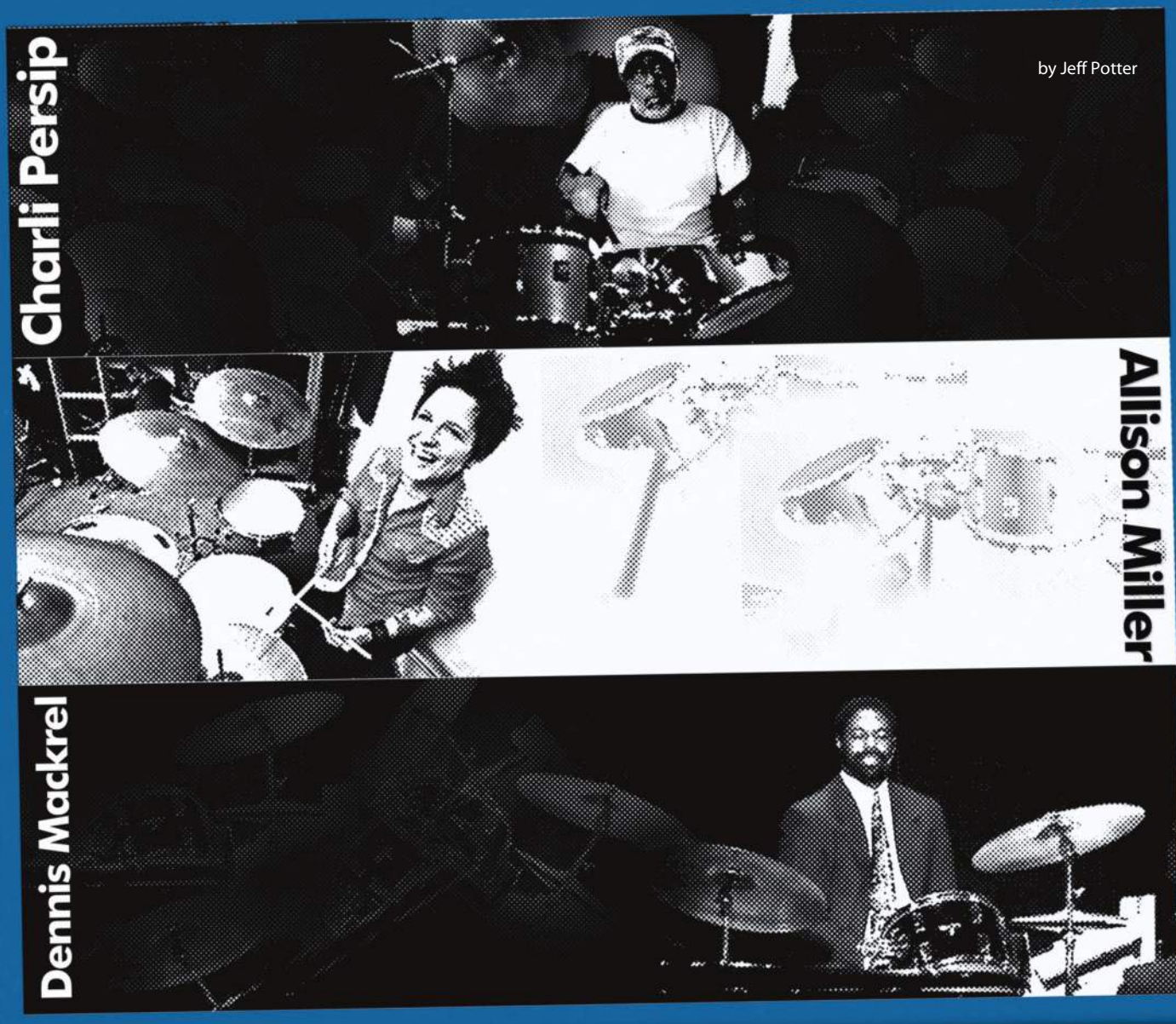

EJ DeCoske

To "swing." To *really* swing. Few drumming skills are as essential, yet none is more nebulous. A concept that's been debated endlessly for decades, the ability to swing a band is considered by most pros, especially in jazz circles, to be the dividing line between a drummer with true value and someone who's just playing "at" the music.

Perhaps it's Duke Ellington's fault. The title to his 1931 hit with lyricist Irving Mills, "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," has been taken as gospel for so long that it's hard to remember a time when the ability to make the music feel supremely good wasn't considered an absolute performance requisite. And though it's the ultimate responsibility of everyone on stage, swinging especially comes down to the drummer, to whom the groove is most often entrusted, and from whom it's *always* demanded. This month *MD* talks to three masters of the art of swinging to find out how to identify it—and how to do it.

CHARLI PERSIP

Dizzy Gillespie, Dinah Washington, Lee Morgan, Ray Charles

MD: Now that you're teaching at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, you must have a widened perspective on how to pass along the art of swinging.

Charli: Actually, that's going to be a topic on our curriculum. I suggested it, and it was like opening a can of worms. The majority of students that come to the school are excellent at playing their instrument, but they're not swinging yet.

MD: How do you point students in the right direction, whether they have little or lots of technique?

Charli: The first thing for an aspiring drummer is listening. Listening is where it's at. The ear is the most important part of the body when it comes to playing this music. We have to ascertain the difference between hearing and listening. There's a big difference. You might hear a sound coming into your ears, but you might not concentrate on that sound. Listening is when you focus on what you're hearing so that you can completely absorb what's coming in.

It's like having a conversation with someone. You make your statement, and then the other person will make their rebuttal. A lot of times you're hearing their rebuttal but you're not really *listening*, because, in your mind, you're busy forming a counter rebuttal. We all do it! I've been guilty of it myself, many times. In drumming, you're accompanying people, so you've got to focus. Drummers may hear what they're accompanying, but they're still thinking about what *they're* going to play.

Let's say you're playing the basic cymbal rhythm and counter rhythms within that. That should come from what you hear. A lot of drummers make the mistake of getting into all their little licks that they've practiced and want to throw in. And they'll do it when it's not the right time.

Another example might be if you're going along playing your embellishments based on the structure of the tune. But the soloist may be playing across the barline, and you're playing in that spot.

MD: Stepping on his toes.

Charli: Absolutely. Listen, and the player will tell you what to do. A lot of drummers feel that's restricting: "But I want to play this or that." But that's not good. The art of creative accompaniment is a very, very profound study that drummers have not perfected on a grand scale yet. I want to perfect the art of focusing, letting what you're hearing dictate what you play. Once I got into that, my ability to accompany improved greatly.

MD: Are drummers sometimes not listening because they're too conscious of their many responsibilities, keeping time and such? Perhaps they try to force things?

Charli: You can't force swing to happen. One thing that will help drummers is to get rid of the idea that they are "timekeepers." The bass is actually the pulse in an ensemble. The drums will hook up with the bass. They should become musically married.

As soon as you start worrying, thinking too much about keeping time, that's the end of swinging. Swing happens! It's a feeling thing. The feeling will take you where you want to go. That's what we, as drummers, have to perfect.

MD: Keeping a relaxed sound is important in swing. When the ride cymbal gets up to fast tempos, it can flatten things out, so to speak, making it hard to stay fluid.

Charli: If you try to keep the dotted note with the "skip" in it, that's not gonna work. Your arm will fall off.

MD: Then should you alternate with patterns that have more space?

Charli: First off, you've got to get rid of that word you used: *patterns*. That's the thing that *kills* drummers. Get rid of patterns! Don't think patterns, think rhythm—even if it's a simple rhythm we may consider corny. Man, if you play a rhythm and it seems corny, the rhythm ain't corny—*you're* corny! It's up to you to make rhythms breathe and live. As soon as you think of patterns, you're getting away from swinging. Patterns don't swing—rhythms swing.

"Everyone wants things immediately now, but swing isn't digital. You have to dedicate your life to it." —Allison Miller

DENNIS MACKREL

Count Basie Orchestra, Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band, Vanguard Jazz Orchestra

MD: How can a young swing-seeker find the path to developing the real thing?

Dennis: The first thing is getting a concept or a mental picture of what the real thing is. That mental picture shouldn't be based solely on technique. It should come from listening to a large pool of musicians. Then make

Our Contributors

Charli Persip has accompanied an extensive roster of jazz greats since the '50s, both in small groups and big bands, amassing a mammoth discography. He's swung with, among others, Dizzy Gillespie, Harry Edison, Freddie Hubbard, Harry James, Lee Morgan, Dinah Washington, Zoot Sims, Gil Evans, Eric Dolphy, Roland Kirk, Gene Ammons, Billy Eckstine, Sonny Rollins, Quincy Jones, Ray Charles, and Joe Williams.

Dennis Mackrel is the director of the Count Basie Orchestra, having started as its drummer in 1983. Other large ensembles he's graced include the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, and his own Manhattan Symphony Jazz Orchestra. He's also played with Lionel Hampton, Hank Jones, Take 6, Tony Bennett, Nancy Wilson, Quincy Jones, Joe Williams, George Shearing, and others.

Allison Miller, a 2011 *MD* Pro Panelist, has toured and recorded with the jazz luminaries Dr. Lonnie Smith and Marty Ehrlich as well as with the singer-songwriters Ani DiFranco, Natalie Merchant, and Brandi Carlile. Miller's latest recording, *Boom Tic Boom*, was included in All About Jazz: New York's top jazz albums of 2010.

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your own judgment call of what you feel is swinging or not. Listen to as many different drummers, in as many different styles, as you can. Find what resonates in *your* heart.

Second, speak to as many musicians that you respect as possible, and talk about what their definition of swing is. For me, one definition of swing is a rhythmic propulsion that creates the sensation that you're *going* somewhere.

MD: What's an experience that resonated in your heart?

Dennis: The experience of being a member of the Count Basie Orchestra with Mr. Basie himself! That experience was truly a blessing. It opened my eyes in terms of forming my concept of what swing is. The Basie band is one of the most widely recognized and agreed-upon models of what swing is. And most people I respected agreed: "Yeah, now *that's* swing."

MD: I'm fascinated that you say it opened your eyes. Doesn't the fact that you were hired mean you *already* swung your butt off?

Dennis: When I first joined the band, however hard I thought I was swinging, I learned very quickly that it goes much deeper than that. A lot of it came from being exposed to swing on such an intense level. Playing with the Basie Orchestra is an intensive study in *one* style. We didn't play any odd times, we didn't play anything funky. We swung! Period.

I also realized that swing doesn't have to do as much with just me as it does with relating to what's going on *around* me. Specifically, I learned how to listen and react to what other members of the band were doing rhythmically, rather than thinking that the swing emanates from me or my technique. You always bring something to a group, but your ability to swing really has a lot more to do with others' ability to swing than you might have believed or have been told.

MD: Why, then, is the drummer always blamed? And, unfortunately, that wasn't a joke.

Dennis: Whenever I do clinics or workshops, I spend most of my time dealing with that issue. It's *real*. The first thing I tell drummers is, "They always hate us." And then I explain why, with a scripture from the Bible that says, "Unto whom much is given, much is required."

Most people will blame the drummer when it's not working, because if you're not doing your job, you *will* bring everybody down. So other musicians will bring that baggage to your doorstep. At the same time, I've also learned that I can swing as hard as I want, but if the other members of the band do not swing, it makes my job difficult to impossible. There's only so much I can do.

Lots of drummers tell me that they'll be on a gig filled with tension. Undoubtedly, someone will say, "This isn't swinging!" But the big question is: How do they know? We've all listened to bands that we thought were swinging, but the group itself is frustrated because the drummer thinks the tenor player doesn't swing, or vice versa. Swing is in the eye of the beholder, and you might want to check *your* concept to discover if it's as accurate as you think it is.

If you find yourself in that situation, it's helpful to

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remember that swinging is like being in any kind of relationship: It doesn't help if you're angry or stiff or hostile. I don't think you can force swing on somebody. Just relax, and if what you're doing is pleasurable in some way, even if people don't agree with it, they won't take offense and resist it. If you try to force it, it's human nature for people to resist. I try to relax and not put my baggage or concept on somebody. Try to step back and look at the situation for what it is, not for what you think it should be.

MD: A drummer might be successful in a small-group context but have trouble swinging a big band. What does that person need to understand?

Dennis: A lot of people scream at drummers, saying they don't listen. One question that drummers should ask themselves is, "What am I supposed to be listening *to*?" I've discovered that there are different things that you should be paying attention to in a big band as opposed to a small group. Drummers need to understand that in a big band there are many other players who are just as responsible for the time and the phrasing as they are. A lot of drummers end up fighting or struggling because they're not listening to the right people.

For example, maybe you're hooking up with the bass player nicely but not recognizing that the lead trumpet player wants to play one particular phrase a certain way that is really far behind the beat. As a result, the phrase doesn't lay right—half of the band is going with you, and the other half is going with the lead trumpet player. The time gets messed up, and, once again, everyone's mad at you. [laughs] You need to know who you're supposed to be paying attention to and when.

As I grow as a musician, I continually try to adjust my concepts, becoming more aware of what's going on around me and realizing that there's much more to things than I had originally thought. I think that the older you get, your world should be getting larger, not smaller.

ALLISON MILLER

Dr. Lonnie Smith, Marty Ehrlich, Boom Tic Boom

MD: Jazz musicians heatedly debate which drummers they prefer to work with—who *really* swings, or not. Does this mean there's no one true standard or definition of what swinging is?

Allison: I don't think there is. Every musician has a different way of swinging. For me, swinging just means it feels good. If a record comes on and immediately I can't help but move in some way—tapping my toes or dancing—it has a swing.

Swing has to have a lilt to it. A lot of great funk drummers and classic rock drummers have a fantastic swing. It's also the way bands are put together that makes amazing swing on a group level. Listen to the famous Miles Davis Quintet, the way Ron Carter and Tony

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Williams are playing together and the way that Herbie Hancock's comping is super-swinging. But if you put one of those guys in another group, it might not swing as hard. Most importantly, it's the bass/drums combination.

When I started studying with Michael Carvin, his thing was that each drummer has a "dance." It's your ride cymbal dance, but every drummer's dance is different. He'd say, "Okay, Allison, you're a great drummer…but now let's find your swing, let's find who Allison Miller is—and it all comes through your ride cymbal." All the great drummers have been in bands that allow them to flourish and accentuate their own swing.

MD: If the combination of musicians is a factor, how about those less-than-magic gigs when it's just not swinging? Is there anything a drummer can do to *make* it work?

Allison: What I do in that situation is strip my beat down to quarter notes. That helps me figure out why something's not swinging. It helps me compare where I place my beat with where the bass player is placing their beat. Stripping it down to quarter notes is taking it back to the foundation. And if I can get it to swing at that foundation, we can go from there. Also, sometimes I go into the Blakey shuffle, or Texas shuffle, where the left hand is playing really quietly on the snare, and that helps me lock it in. I might also feather the bass drum very quietly on every quarter note.

Then there's the philosophy that there's no such thing as *making* something swing; it either swings or it doesn't. I struggle over this with my students all the time. I have a lot of young students who don't listen to jazz, yet they're studying jazz drumming. It's not in their bones; it's not in their soul. They want me to *teach* them how to swing, and I really have conflicting emotions about it, because either you've been raised around music that swings or you haven't. It's just really hard to teach people how to swing.

MD: But if it's not in their bones, can't students venture out and immerse themselves all they can?

Allison: Yes, totally. But I think these kids just want me to show them an exercise that will teach them how to swing. But swing isn't digital. Everyone wants things immediately now; they want to push a button and have everything at their fingertips. But that's not how swing works. Swing is something you have to dedicate your life to—either growing up around soulful people and soulful music, or you have to totally immerse yourself in that music, explore the history, play along with records.

MD: Even if swing itself can't be taught, aren't there exercises that are helpful for its application?

Allison: When I studied with Lenny White, he said young drummers don't treat every beat equally; they assume that if they're accenting 2 and 4, it's swinging. But in reality, there should be no 1. Every beat should be as important as the others, and there's got to be an organic forward motion happening that's not about accents on a certain beat. So sometimes he had me practice just quarter notes on the cymbal—that's it!

Similarly, I have students play quarter notes on the ride and 2 and 4 on the hi-hat, feathering the bass drum and playing along with the metronome set on 2 and 4, *not* on all four. That's great for focusing on the feeling of swing within the quarter note, and the metronome provides a backdrop to play off. I'm also a big advocate of using Ted Reed's *Syncopation* book. It's simple but great for developing your swing and four-way independence. And a harder, very important part is the dynamic balance between the limbs.

Also, I stress to my students to go back. If they like a certain drummer, I tell them to check out who that drummer liked, then find who *that* drummer liked. It's a lineage that's passed on.

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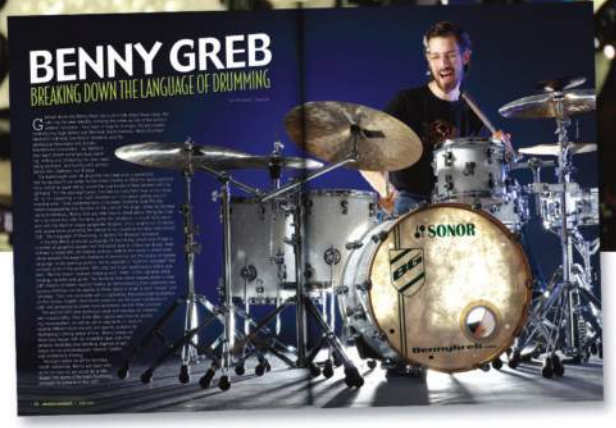

"Modern Drummer was a big part of my inspiration and education while growing up and playing. If you want to prepare yourself for life as a professional musician, there is no better way than to listen to music, to read the interviews of the guys that are doing it...and, oh yeah...to practice."

–Benny Greb

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Chops Builders

Part 13: Swiss Army Triplet

by Bill Bachman

This month we're going to take a look at the Swiss Army triplet. This rudiment offers you the opportunity to play groups of three notes with a flam at the beginning in such a way that each hand plays only doubles. It might sound as if there's a lot going on, but it's physically pretty easy to play. The Swiss Army triplet has built-in dynamics, flows extremely well, and is very useful for making music around the kit in both straight-8th and triplet forms. When you listen to Tony Williams blazing flam patterns on his toms, quite often they're simply Swiss triplets.

The key to the Swiss triplet is the double beat played by the lead hand. The double should be played in such a way that the two strokes decrescendo without the stick stopping. When going from the accent to the tap, we would normally play a downstroke and stop the stick low to the drum in order to achieve dynamic contrast. In this case, however, at even a medium tempo there isn't enough time to stop the stick after the accent and then restart it for the tap at a lower height. Therefore we need to allow the lead hand to play a freely rebounding double where the second stroke is an intentionally weak bounce. This free rebound creates the dynamic contrast between the accent and tap, and it allows the stick's energy from the initial accent to flow into the inner beat.

The opposite hand will need to play the grace note and third partial of the triplet. These two notes form a low double, which will require some finger control and finesse. In regular flams, the grace note should be pushed ahead rhythmically in order to precede the following hand's accent. But in Swiss triplets, the double beats are straightened out into an even double in order to flow smoothly. The flam between the two hands is created by laying back the accent just behind the grace note.

Swiss triplets should feel as if you're playing weak double beats with the lead hand and filling in the gaps with the opposite hand. For those of you with well-developed "alley-oop" finger control for playing strong double beats (where both beats are at roughly the same stick height and dynamic level), avoid using too much of these chops, as strong inner beats will diminish the impact of the accent in Swiss triplets. The more you can exaggerate the contrast in stick height and dynamics, the better, since your goal is to emulate an accented flam and an unaccented tap.

Here are quick tips for playing Swiss Army triplets:

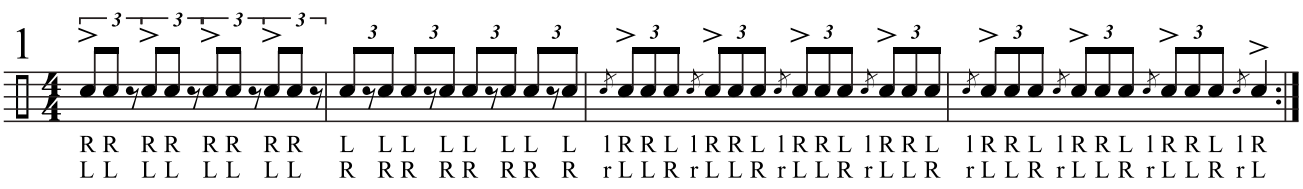
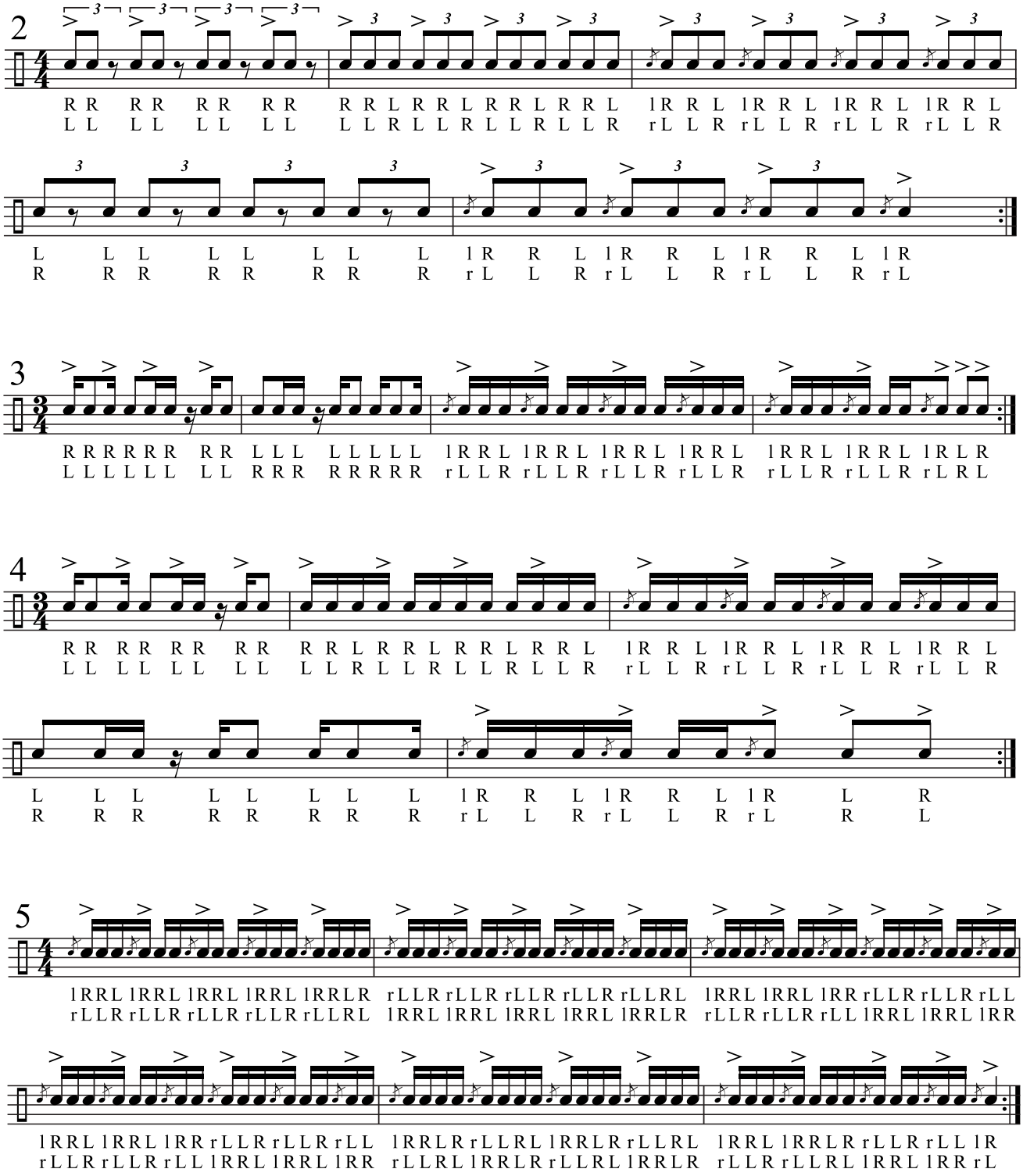
1. Avoid hitting the accents extra hard with tight strokes, where the fingers are squeezing the stick when they should be playing the second note of the double.

2. Avoid letting the accent bounce up high, leaving you unable to differentiate the dynamic between the accent and tap.

3. Play the first stroke with a big accent from a high stick height. Don't cheat the accent in the interest of playing the following beats low.

When you practice Swiss triplets from slow to fast to slow over one minute, the slow speed will require a slightly different technique. At very slow tempos, all of the strokes can easily be played with the wrists, using downstrokes on the accents for clear dynamic contrast. As you get to a medium speed and higher, you'll need to start letting the stick bounce loosely from the accent to the second and third beats, or else the wrists will tighten up. This change in technique should happen gradually, in correlation with the tempo.

Practice the following exercises slowly, and then begin to work your way up in tempo. Since Swiss triplets don't alternate, be sure to practice them leading with each hand. Good luck!



Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician and a freelance drum-set player in Nashville. For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons through Skype, visit billbachman.net.

Double Bass Substitute

Part 3: Opening the Hi-Hat

by Mike Johnston

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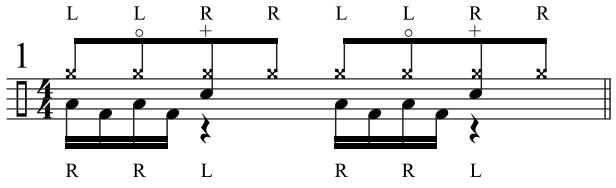
MUSIC KEY
open H.H.
S.D.
F.T.
B.D.

This is our third and final installment of "Double Bass Substitute," and things are about to get tricky. One of the main reasons why I developed the technique we're covering here, where we use the floor tom to emulate a second bass drum, was so that I could play common double bass patterns while opening and closing the hi-hats. I remember hearing songs when I was younger that had a simple open/closed hi-hat ostinato played throughout, and I thought it would be amazing to play some tasteful double bass underneath that type of hi-hat part. The technique we'll be working on in this lesson will give you the ability to do just that. The exercises will also help you build up your four-way independence.

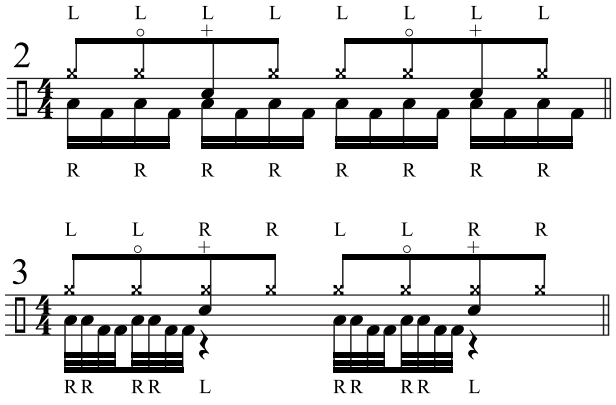
I've written out some common double bass patterns using 16th notes and 32nd notes. These patterns are broken up between the floor tom and the bass drum. For the 16th notes, we'll be using alternating singles between the right foot and right hand (the left foot and left hand for lefties). Thirty-second notes will be played as double strokes. On top of the double bass patterns, we'll play simple hi-hat/snare figures that involve opening and closing the hi-hat. The snare drum will always fall on 2 and 4 of each bar.

Simple Hi-Hat Ostinato

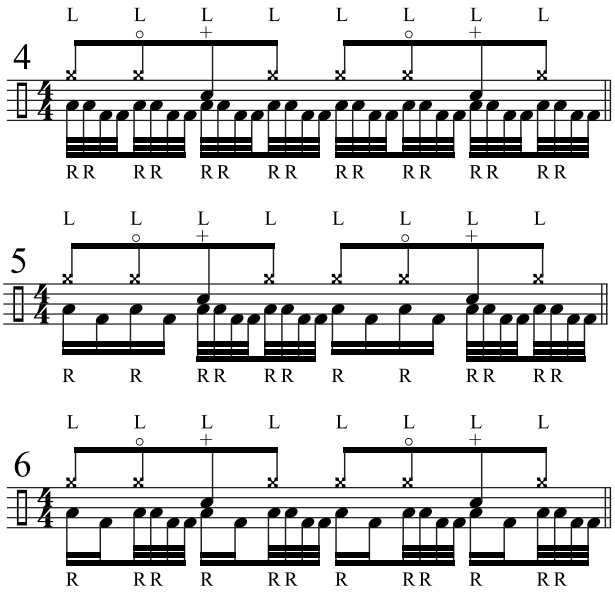
The first hi-hat/snare pattern is straight 8th notes with openings on the "&" of 1 and 3.



Pay close attention to the sticking. When the right hand is on the floor tom, the left hand will be on the hi-hat.

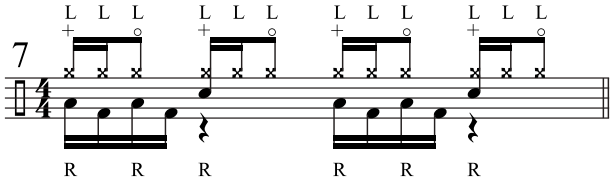


When the floor tom and the snare are played at the same time, the hi-hat will be omitted.

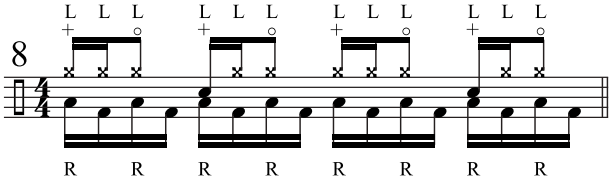


Advanced Hi-Hat Ostinato

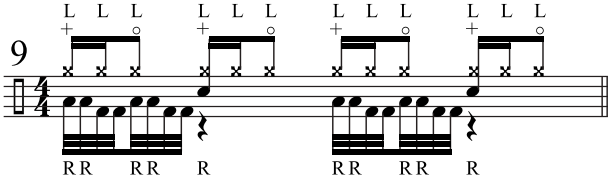
In this section the hi-hat plays a repetitive rhythm of two 16th notes followed by one 8th note (1-e-&, 2-e-&, 3-e-&, 4-e-&). The hi-hat opens on every "&."



Again, when the right hand is on the floor tom, the left hand will be on the hi-hat.



Omit the hi-hat when the floor tom and the snare are played at the same time.



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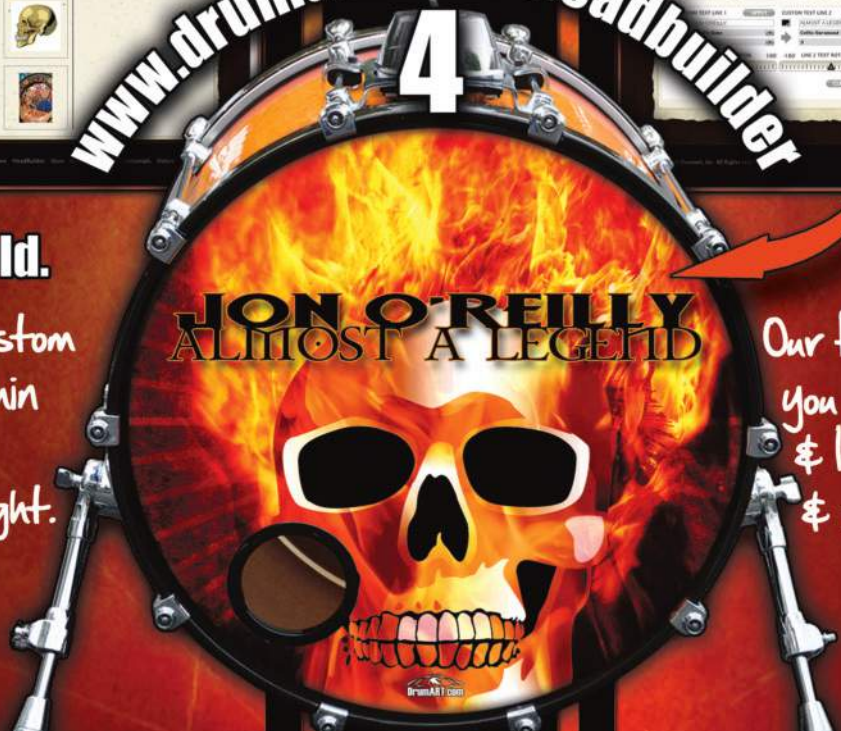

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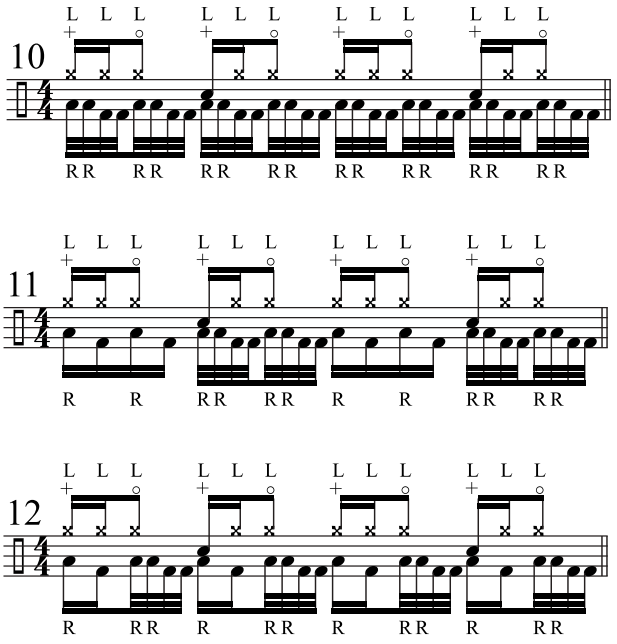

Mike Johnston teaches out of the mikeslessons.com facility in Sacramento, California, where he offers live online drum lessons and international drum camps.

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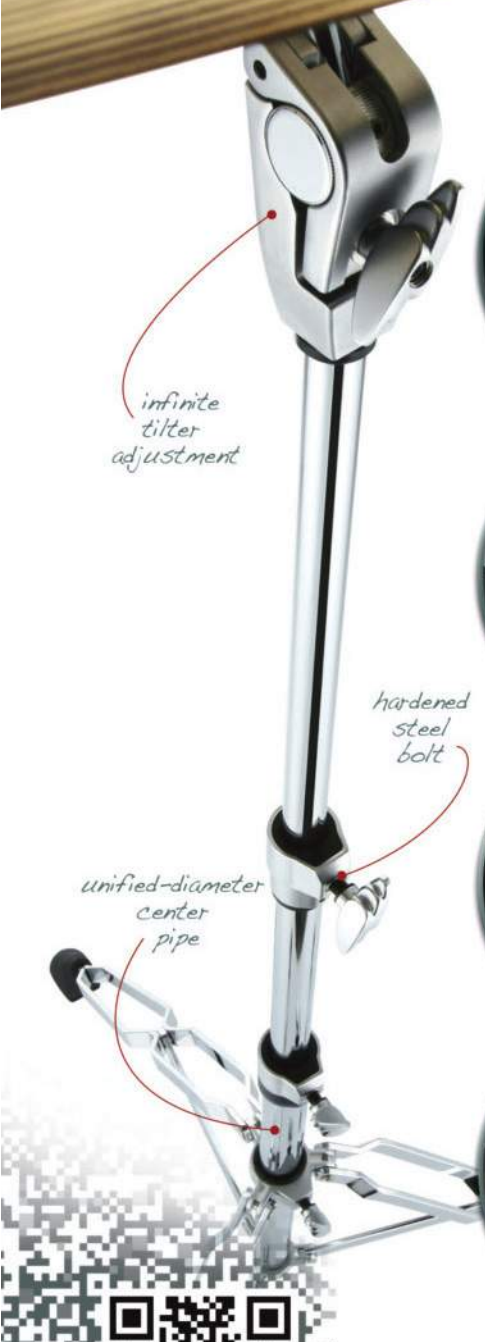

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Rudimental Jazz Revisited

Part 2: Paradiddles

by Steve Fidyk

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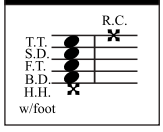
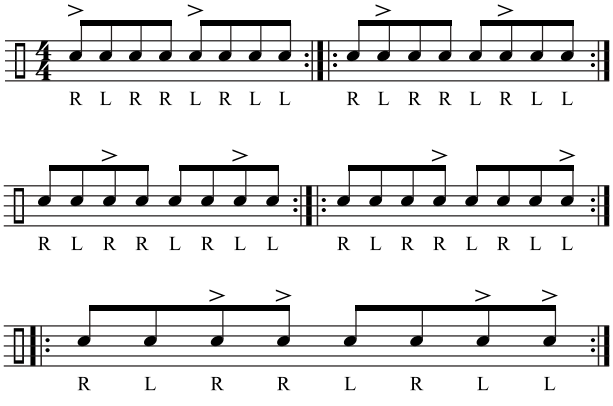
MUSIC KEY



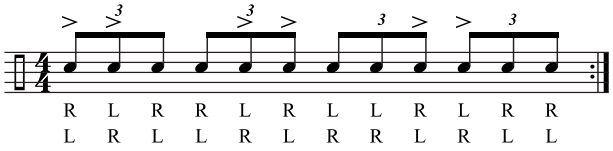
The first installment of this two-part series (May 2011) focused on the single- and double-stroke roll, as applied to the drumset in the recently reprinted version of Joe Morello's classic book *Rudimental Jazz*. In my lessons with Joe, he patiently explained the importance of developing a *sound* with these two essential rudiments on one surface first (practice pad or snare drum), before moving to a multi-surface instrument like the drumset. By practicing each rudiment diligently, I began to understand how the stickings influenced the sound, texture, and articulation of my solo ideas. Joe would always say, "What the mind can conceive, man can achieve."

I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to spend time with Joe and learn under his tutelage. In addition to the examples included here, I encourage you to study the vast collection of exercises in his books *Master Studies* and *Master Studies II*, and also to listen closely to the great music he made. By doing so, you will help extend his legacy to future generations.

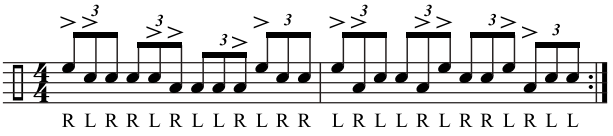
Here, we're examining the single paradiddle, which consists of two single strokes and a double stroke. We begin on page 13 of *Rudimental Jazz*, where Joe offers creative accent variations based on this rudiment. First practice them as written, and then practice them as 16th notes or 8th notes with a looser swing feel.



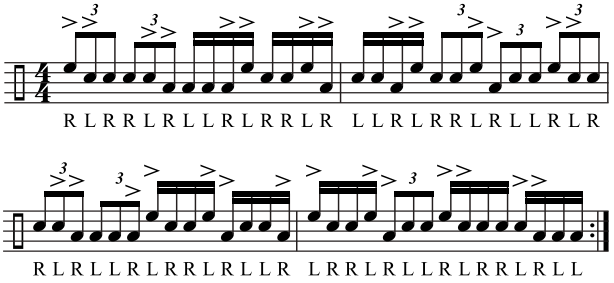
Now phrase the written stickings as 8th-note triplets. Here's one possibility, which is based on the fifth measure of the previous example.



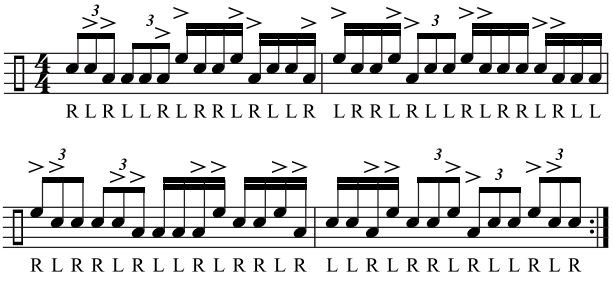
Here's that same sticking applied around the kit.



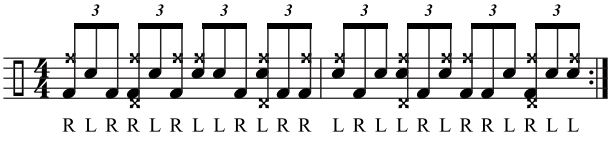
Using a consistent sticking, accent pattern, and drumset orchestration, try shifting between 8th-note triplets and 16ths over a four-bar phrase.



Now reorder the measures. Here's the same phrase as in the previous example, only starting with the third measure.



To develop four-way independence, you can substitute each "R" in the stickings with a bass drum note and then play these new variations over a swing ride/hi-hat pattern. Here's a variation based on single paradiddles.



You can also practice each coordination example in different time signatures. Our final example is a variation phrased in 5/4—the time signature that Joe made famous.

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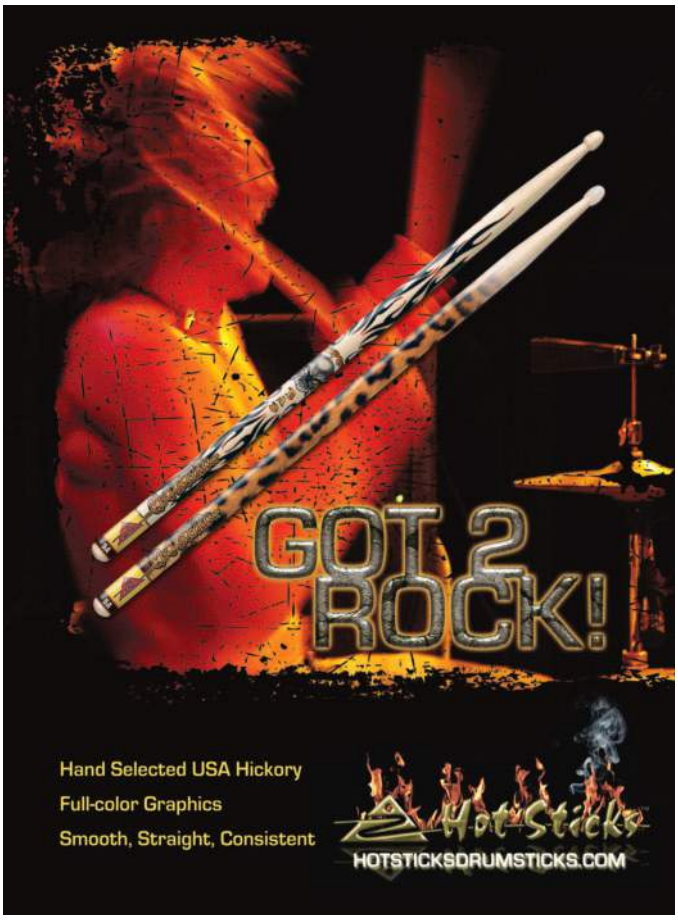

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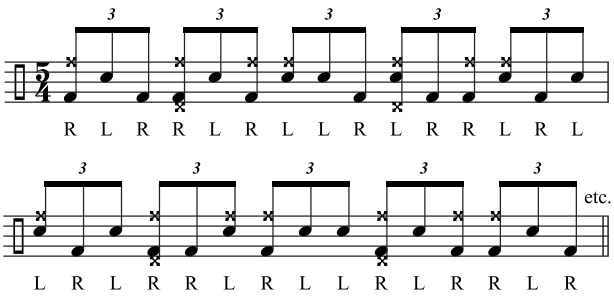

As you can see, the combination possibilities within *Rudimental Jazz* are endless. Have fun as you explore this classic book, and make sure to swing those rudiments!

To watch a video of Steve Fidyk playing a 5/4 solo dedicated to Joe Morello, log on to moderndrummer.com.

Steve Fidyk is the drummer with the Army Blues Big Band from Washington, D.C., and a member of the jazz faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. Fidyk is also the author of the critically acclaimed book *Inside the Big Band Drum Chart*, which is published by Mel Bay.

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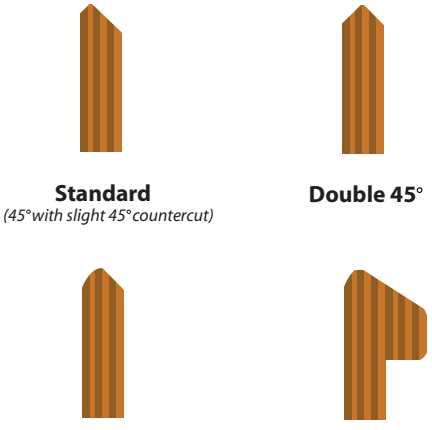
DIY Drum Restoration

Part 4: Bearing Edges and Snare Beds

by J.R. Frondelli

In the third installment of this series (May 2011), we finished up with a basic discussion of bearing-edge profiles. This month I'd like to discuss each profile individually. As a refresher, the illustration below shows the four most popular bearing edges.



Standard
(45° with slight 45° countercut)

Double 45°

45° with roundover

Vintage roundover
(with reinforcement rings only)

Standard Edge (45° With Slight 45° Countercut)

This is a simple, all-purpose bearing edge that requires two straight cuts with a common 45-degree chamfer bit. The absolute simplest edge is a straight 45-degree, but heads don't seat well on that version. The countercut enables better head seating by moving the apex of the bearing edge just past the collar curve of the drumhead and onto the flat part of the film. If the collar curve is situated inside the playing area, the low-end tuning range will be severely compromised because the curve will create a wrinkle around the perimeter of the head.

While the standard edge works just fine, it does somewhat limit the head-to-shell contact that's a desirable characteristic with drums that have thin to medium-thick shells. Minimum head-to-shell contact allows maximum sustain but yields a "cooler" drum sound because you're hearing mainly tone from the drumheads. It also renders head choice and condition more critical.

Increasing head-to-shell contact by substituting a slight roundover for a 45-degree countercut enables some vibration to be transferred to the shell from the head, exciting the shell and adding its own tonality to the mix. This is often described as warmth. Concurrently, sustain is decreased slightly, as some of the vibration has been tapped off by the bearing edge in order to excite the shell. You'll find a lot of thin-shell drums sporting 45-degree bearing edges with a slight roundover.

Standard 45-degree edges and standard 45-degree with slight roundover edges are very similar; they just offer slightly different flavors. Drum builders will usually make the 45-degree countercut and then contour it with sandpaper. At the commercial level, the shell is spun horizontally while a skilled craftsman holds sandpaper against the edge to create the roundover. The end results are identical.

Double 45°

The double 45-degree edge is similar to the standard edge, but the main cut and countercut are of the same depth, yielding a symmetrical profile. This version moves the apex of the edge further into the playing area of the head, guaranteeing the lowest tuning range. In addition, the extra width of the countercut allows additional head-to-shell contact for more shell tone. Because PET (aka Mylar) drumhead film doesn't like to follow straight contours, however, the contact is not very tight, so a good measure of sustain is still available. Due to the extended tuning range of the double 45-degree edge, along with the sustain and fair amount of shell tone, many builders and drummers swear by this profile.

45° With Roundover

With double 45-degree edges, the head-to-shell contact is not very intimate. The firm characteristics of PET film tend to favor softer contours, so to assure better contact it might be best to cut a large roundover on the outside. This profile increases the contact area (because the head is now wrapped around a curve, rather than a straight edge), and the head film is tight with the shell. We still have a maximized low-end tuning range and a lot of shell tone in the mix, but there's reduced sustain. These three factors add up to a rich, punchy, "vintage" sound. It's no small coincidence that this edge profile is among the most widely preferred, as it brings out the best qualities of good shells.

Vintage Roundover

The vintage roundover edge is often applied to drums that have reinforcing rings. Here's a little background on reinforcing rings. When solid or ply drum shells are created as flat panels and steam-bent into a circle, reinforcing rings are glued in to help the shell stay round. Wood has a good memory and wants to return to its original flat state. The rings counter these forces.

Modern dry-bent shells don't require rings; the rings are used only for nostalgic and sonic purposes. The nostalgia connection is easy to see; the sonic part is more nebulous. Rings add mass to the shell, thus raising the drum's natural resonant pitch. The extra mass concentrated at the edge also thickens the attack. In conjunction with a heavy roundover edge, the addition of reinforcement rings is a key element in achieving a

Continued on page 84

Win a Scholarship to the KoSA 16 International Percussion Workshop, Drum Camp & Festival!

KoSA is awarding three scholarships to its International Percussion Workshop, Drum Camp & Festival. The winners will receive a week of intense hands-on drum and percussion training with some of the finest artists in the world. KoSA 16 will be held at Vermont's beautiful Castleton State College, July 26 through 31, 2011.

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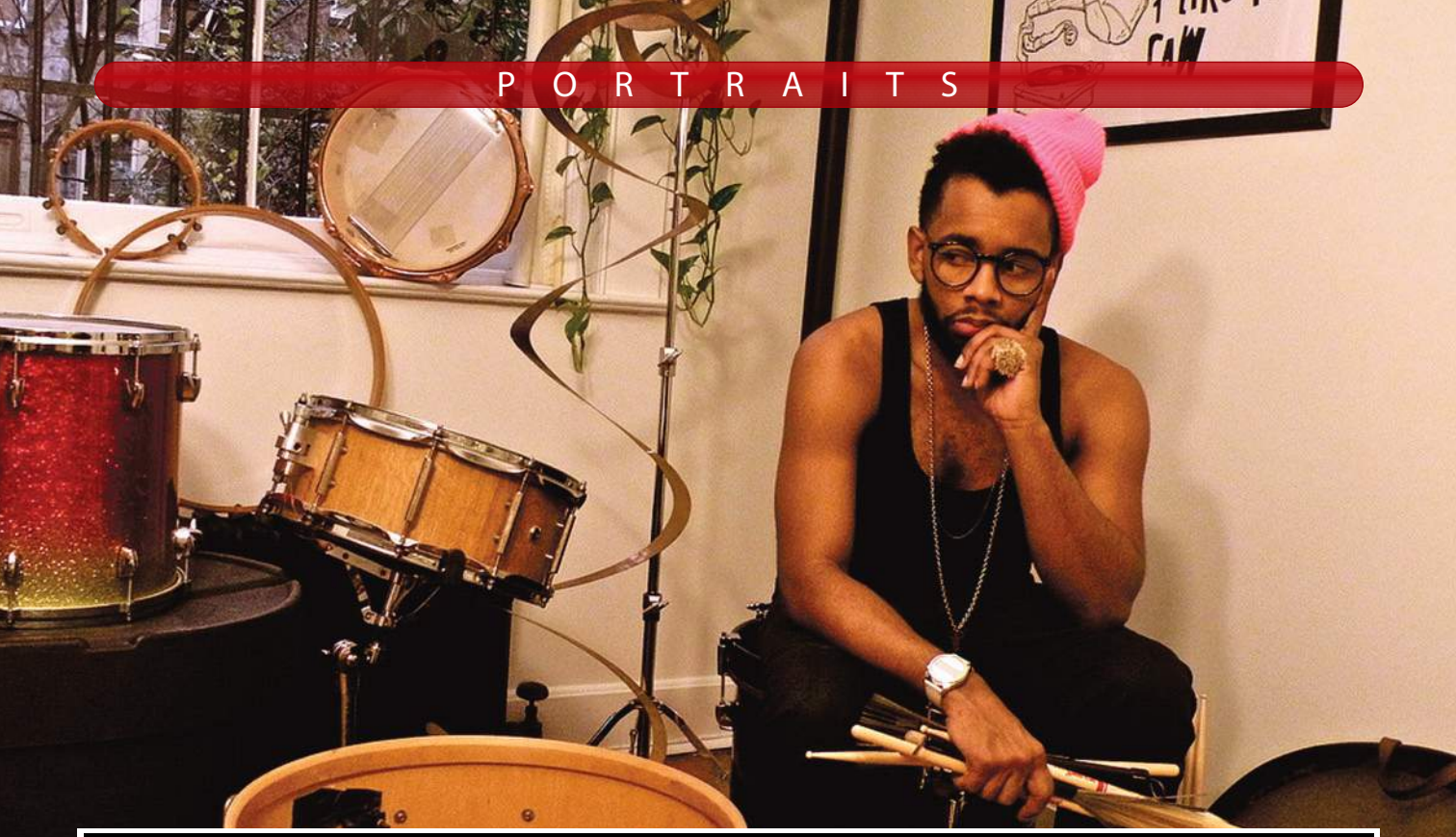

Jamire Williams

by Martin Patmos

Once you develop "the touch," says the busy **Robert Glasper, Christian Scott, Jacky Terrasson, and Kenny Garrett accomplice,** genre labels don't matter—it's all about playing for the music.

As pianist Robert Glasper's harmonic swells fill New York City's Jazz Standard, Jamire Williams' tight and thuddy bass drum punch, sharp snare crack, and reserved ride cymbal work begin to drive the music, in this case Herbie Hancock's "I Have a Dream." The funky figures Williams plays under and against Glasper's romantic chords create a captivating sound, rich yet poppin'. This dynamic drumming is filled with ghost notes and accents, dancing with the beat and pushing the piano upward. With the bass holding a solid bottom, Glasper and Williams fuel one another, each feeding off the other's ideas before the tune is brought to a close.

Williams possesses phenomenal speed, a talent for shading, a serious groove, and an uncanny ability to seamlessly fuse rhythms from bebop to hip-hop. Such attributes have led to his working with soul-jazz organ master Dr. Lonnie Smith, first-rate alto saxophonist Kenny Garrett, and forward-thinking players like Glasper and trumpeter Christian Scott. A producer as well as a drummer, Williams draws on a wide-ranging musical knowledge and makes groove and color choices in the moment.

"I think of myself as a painter," Jamire says. "It's really just catering to the music. Sometimes it's all tight like James Brown, sometimes it's loose, sometimes it's something else." Indeed, at a recent performance with Glasper's trio, Williams' playing moves from a tight pocket to a fatback groove, simultaneously laying a foundation and shading the beat. Throughout the evening, the drummer exhibits joy; at times he's seemingly on the verge of jumping up from the kit and dancing. Listening to him interact with Glasper, you realize he's hearing everything and missing nothing.

And then you notice Williams' drumset. Perched behind three snare drums, an 18" bass drum, a 14" floor tom off to the side, and various cymbals, Jamire takes his own approach to sound and language. He uses his snares to color the music, with one high, tight, and crisply popping; one exhibiting warm, woody mids; and the third emitting deep, loose, sloppy lows. "I started with multiple snares about two years ago," Williams explains, "putting one in place of the floor tom. With Christian Scott and his mix of alternative rock, jazz, and everything else, a normal snare just wasn't enough.

"Toms are overrated to me these days," he adds.

So now, with snares in places traditionally occupied by the rack tom and floor tom, Williams has greatly expanded his options for chatter and groove. He's also apt to tape a piece of cloth to a snare batter, drop a tambourine onto his hi-hat, or place one cymbal on top of another. Ultimately, it's about "going for the sound," he says. "I like the dead sound—it's more compressed and you hear the

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Williams plays Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute drums, including a 14x14 floor tom and a 14x18 bass drum. His three snares are a $5^1/_2$x14 Longo, a $3^1/_2$x14 Sonor, and a 6x14 custom drum made from a wine barrel, which he acquired in Switzerland. Jamire's cymbals usually include a 22" Spizzichino ride, an old 20" K Zildjian ride, an 18" Zildjian A Custom FX, and 16" Zildjian hi-hats comprising a K Light hi-hat bottom and a K Constantinople crash top.

Continued on page 84

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PORTRAITS (continued from page 82)

attack. It's coming out of hip-hop, where the production sound is distinct. As for the cymbals, they're about textures." That said, a particular timbre might be held in reserve for just the right moment in just the right tune, showing Jamire's patience and desire to play for the song and no more.

Growing up in Houston, Texas, Williams was no stranger to music, with his mother playing piano, singing, and directing a church choir. "I've been playing drums since I can remember," Jamire says, scratching his beard as he thinks back. "My mom always knew I was a drummer—I had a Mickey Mouse drumset at two, and I was playing at church when I was six or seven."

Williams attended Houston's noted High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, and today he mentions two teachers—Sebastian Whittaker and Craig Green—as being particularly influential to drummers in the area. "The Houston lineage is crazy!" Williams says. "You have Chris Dave, Mark Simmons, Eric Harland, Kendrick Scott…. We all went to the same school and had the same teachers."

After moving to New York and attending the New School, Williams was a rising sideman before long. Today he can boast his own group, ERIMAJ, as well. Along his journey Williams has developed impressive speed, fluidity, and dynamics. "It was a whole thing, growing up, to see who had the fastest singles," he says. Paraphrasing his friend Chris Dave, Jamire adds, "Everybody can play loud, but can you play with the same intensity quietly?" This challenge became an early focus.

During the Glasper set that we catch, Williams and his chattering figures move seamlessly from bop through R&B to hip-hop and back, for a truly informed yet unconsciously forward-thinking line. Commenting on his skills and sound, the drummer says, "It's like signing your name—it's all about the touch."

In discussing the various musicians and groups he works with, Williams notes, "I don't consider myself a jazz drummer. I'm a *drummer*. I like to put myself in different situations, adapt, and still have it be me. With a piano trio it's such a conversation—you've got to be constant, on edge. Listening. The music calls for different dynamics, focus, staying on your toes—where is it going? With Christian Scott, it's a lot of grooves, but it's not boring. It's like a cycle. I can change up the sound and explore."

For an example of this approach, listen to Williams' playing on Kenny Garrett's 2008 recording, *Sketches of MD: Live at the Iridium*, where the pocket on "Wayne's Thang" is sure to cause your head to nod along. Adding to Jamire's varied palette is the disco groove of Cubic Zirconia, as well as the material presented by ERIMAJ. In a 2010 live review of the latter group, the *New York Times* said, "The music sounded properly new…and still unnamed." Under Williams' leadership, the band, which includes Jason Moran on Fender Rhodes and Corey King on trombone, among others, draws on jazz, R&B, rock, and more. An EP titled *Memo to All* is out now, and a full-length disc recorded last December is on the way.

SHOP TALK (continued from page 80)

true vintage sound.

There has been much controversy and discussion as to which angle the inner cut should be with reinforcing rings. Traditionally, standard 30-degree cuts were used, but 45-degree edges can also be found on vintage drums. So, which is best? Sonically, there's no difference between a 30- and a 45-degree edge. When you're routing wood, however, once it's removed, it's gone forever. I personally choose 30-degree edges, as they leave the most mass/material on the bearing edge. If a 45-degree edge is desired subsequently, it's easy to convert the 30-degree version.

A word of caution: Merely cutting a vintage roundover edge on any old shell doesn't guarantee a great vintage sound. In fact, if the shell is thick and dense, the vintage roundover is somewhat counterproductive, because a heavy shell requires a lot of energy to get it to vibrate. Cutting a roundover edge on a shell like this could bleed off too much vibration. The resulting sound will lack sustain and attack and will be all head tone.

All Things Considered

I've just described the four most popular edge profiles, but there are variations of each. For example, you will find some vintage Gretsch drums with a full roundover cut from the outside in (a reverse edge), with no angle cut. This creates a lot of head-to-shell contact, and the takeoff point for the head is moved as far inward as possible. I recently cut these edges on an old Kent kit, mainly to compensate for divots in the outer edge of the shell, and the end result with those thin maple shells was ridiculously good.

Another factor is that different drums often require different edges to optimize their sound and response. For instance, I like to grade the edge roundovers on a complete kit, with the smaller-radius roundover being on the smallest tom and the largest radius residing on the bass drum. I also like to cut roundovers on the batter side of a snare while keeping the snare-side edges pretty sharp to maximize sensitivity and high-frequency response. That's my personal preference. Every builder has his or her own recipe. In the end, the final drum sound is all that really matters.

Snare Beds

Toms and kick drums require level edges for maximum tunability. But when you look at the resonant side of a snare drum, you'll see material missing from the edge at two opposing points. It may be barely discernible, or it may be fairly deep and prominent. Why is this?

The depressions in the edges of the snare drum (called snare beds) give the snare wires a place to lie properly. Without a snare bed, the snares would rattle, often uncontrollably, yielding an indistinct tone. The depressions allow a slight curvature across the surface of the snare-side head so the snares can be pulled into intimate contact with the film. The level of contact is dependent on the depth of the snare beds at the edge. The requirements of snare beds differ, depending on whether the drum is designed with standard or extended snares—or possibly even gut snares, which still enjoy limited use. The manipulation of snare beds can be used to shape the overall tone and response of the drum. We will explore this concept in greater detail in the next part of this series.

J.R. Frondelli is the owner of Frondelli USA Drums, which specializes in repairing, reworking, and restoring vintage drums, as well as building new vintage-style drums. For more info, visit frondelli.com.

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GEARING UP Drumkit Details, On Stage and Up Close

Dirty Dozen Brass Band's TERENCE HIGGINS

Interview by Dave Previ • Photos by Paul La Raia

Drums: Pearl Masters Custom in platinum mist finish
A. 5 1/2x14 snare
B. 9x12 tom
C. 14x14 floor tom
D. 14x16 floor tom
E. 18x22 bass drum

"This is a new configuration I've just started using, with the small tom mounted on a snare drum stand," Higgins says. "I used to use a rack system, but I've condensed it to just stands.

"I can do a Dirty Dozen gig with snare, kick, floor tom, hi-hat, and cowbell and still swing. It doesn't require fusion-sounding drums, because the music doesn't dictate that. When I'm playing with my band SwampGrease, we do fusion, R&B, and a lot of old New Orleans tunes, so I like to have a fusion setup with 8", 10", and 12" toms.

"No matter what gig I'm playing, I like the floor tom to be dark and deep. Even if it slips in tuning, I like the floor tom low, almost mimicking an 18". And my kick drum never changes. I get more punch and it resonates better than a 16x22. It always sounds good, even without going through a PA."

Cymbals: Paiste
1. 13" Twenty series hi-hats
2. 20" 2002 Wild crash
3. 22" Traditionals ride
4. 17" Twenty series Thin crash
5. 18" Twenty series Thin China

"I like thinner cymbals in general; they have a lot more punch and they get away fast. I don't like stuff that's too pingy. When I'm doing a lot of second line, I use the 22" Traditionals ride. When I'm doing other, heavier stuff, I like to use a Dark Energy. The 20" Wild crash is so explosive, and it cuts through anything. When I really need some octane, I start rocking that one."

Heads: Remo Coated Ambassador snare batter and Clear Pinstripe tom batters

"My snare is between a fat and a low crack. I like to tune it down sometimes, but it depends on the tune. I use a forty-strand wire set because with second line there are a lot of press rolls, and that gives me the extra sensitivity that I'm looking for. I don't choke the snares; I let them vibrate. And I like the bottom head tighter than the top head. If I need a lower tuning during a gig, I'll loosen one lug. And then, when I need that 'crack,' I just crank up the one lug to find the sound I want.

"For the toms, I'm keeping the bottom head tighter than the top, but not too choked and not too high pitched—just enough to where the drum resonates the most."

Sticks: Pro-Mark Pro-Round 5A and 737

Hardware: Pearl, including Eliminator hi-hat and bass drum pedals

"With the Dozen I don't really use the double pedal much, because the music doesn't require that, but there are times when we have some dynamic endings where I'm able to do some 16th-note or triplet patterns, or I slip it into my solo."

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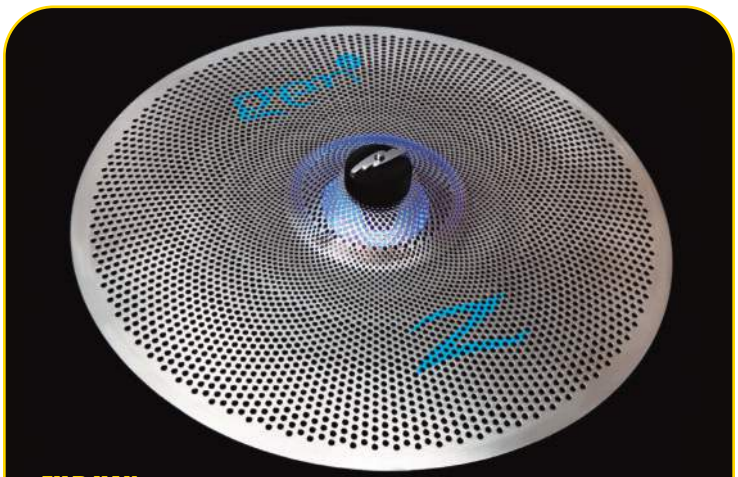
protectionracket.com



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John Sferra Signature Snare Batter

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yamaha.com

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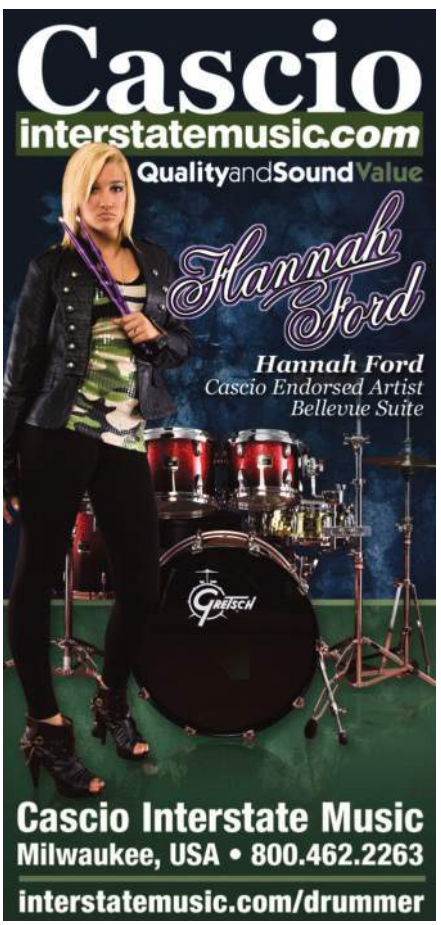
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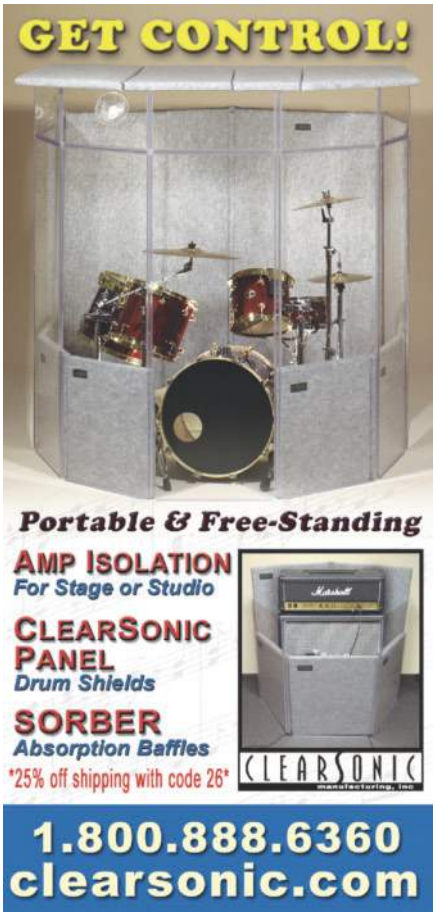
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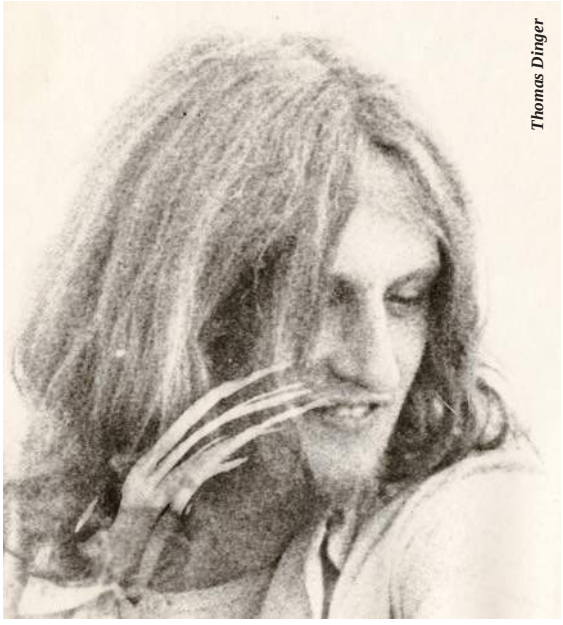
KLAUS DINGER

The drumming half of **the German duo Neu!** was an enigma, even to the people who knew him best. Yet his ageless "Apache" beat has continued to inspire countless musicians after his passing.

by Will Romano


Thomas Dinger

Drummers have attempted to dissect it and improve upon it. Brian Eno and David Bowie swore by it. Filmmaker Quentin Tarantino heard the visual possibilities in it. And many indie rockers worship at the altar of it.

"It" is Klaus Dinger's so-called "motorik" beat: an 8th-note-heavy pulse propelling the music of the highly influential Krautrock band Neu! Sometimes wrongly labeled mechanical, the push and pull of Dinger's steady, almost tribal thumping (what Dinger himself referred to as "the Apache beat") is anything but robotic.

Deceptively orderly in its design, the Neu! beat was shaped by the idiosyncrasies of its creator. A self-professed difficult person, Dinger was complicated, stubborn, persistent, and spiteful at times, but also unstoppable—very much like the rhythms he made famous.

"Klaus was so powerful, and you always had the feeling he would crash through any wall, any obstacle," says Michael Rother, guitarist/multi-instrumentalist and Neu! cofounder. "Once Klaus cut his hand on the jagged edge of one of his broken cymbals. He never stopped [playing] for a second. There was no mistaking what direction Klaus was headed—it was forward."

Dinger laid the groundwork for his humanistic beat as an early member of the celebrated German band Kraftwerk. While working on the group's sophomore effort, Dinger and leader Florian Schneider disagreed on the musical direction. Rather than compromise, Dinger and Rother (the latter had joined after the release of Kraftwerk's debut) decided to leave to form Neu! The music they'd make would be as fresh as the name—the German word for "new"—suggested.

With the guidance and vision of studio production wizard Konrad "Conny" Plank, Rother and Dinger acquitted themselves well by creating swirling staticky windstorms, monstrously oppressive drones, highly impressionistic seas of reverse guitar noise, and tortured vocals for their self-titled 1972 debut. Dinger's other-than-metronomic timing was the perfect framework for the duo's organic musical interactions and exotic (and sometimes ghastly) overdubbed tracks, which ran parallel to the British progressive movement but also foretold the coming of punk's revolution.

"What we can learn from Neu! and Klaus Dinger is that you don't have to get hung up on how technically good a drummer is in a band," says Sonic Youth drummer Steve Shelley, who joined Rother and Tall Firs guitarist/vocalist (and Sonic Youth sound engineer) Aaron Mullan in reshaping Neu!'s music for the Hallogallo 2010 project. "If you listen to those records again, [Dinger is] liberal with timing and you don't care—Klaus is what that music needed."

"I could communicate my new kind of European approach to music with Klaus," Rother says, "music originating in the roots of European folk and classical."

As Neu!'s infectious four-on-the-floor feel invaded German discos, the band was preparing to release the highly experimental *Neu! 2*, the second side of which was largely composed of studio trials (i.e., the tracks "Neuschnee" and "Super" played at various speeds). Soon after the release, Rother bolted to form Harmonia with members of the German electronic outfit Cluster just as Dinger searched for a new musical identity. Dinger turned his focus away from drumming by emphasizing his multi-instrumentalist tendencies, forming his own band, La Düsseldorf, and even giving birth to his alter ego, keyboardist Nikolaus van Rhein, a reference to Dinger's beloved Rhine River.

This diverse musical path sustained itself through the recording of the next

The Origin of the Neu! Beat?

Much like Goethe's romantic literary hero Werther (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*), Klaus Dinger stuck to his guns right to the very end: He loved life, loved a woman compulsively—almost obsessively—and was the proverbial sensitive artist trapped by a pragmatic society. If Werther had his beloved Lotte, then Dinger spent most of his artistic life trying to interpret his longing for his Swedish ex-girlfriend/muse, Anita. Reportedly Dinger translated this yearning into his trademark driving Neu! beat, which we can interpret as a metaphor for his undying devotion to and constant search for his lost love. "Anita was the biggest inspiration for Klaus," Miki Yui says. "Klaus made something universal out of his very private experiences."

The repetition in the artwork accompanying Neu!'s and La Düsseldorf's albums neatly symbolizes Dinger's driving yet subtly shifting "motorik" beats.

Neu! album, *Neu! 75*; Dinger decided to play drums on only side one of the original LP, while Hans Lampe and Klaus's brother Thomas Dinger handled the percussive duties on side two. Ironically, *Neu! 75*, through atmospherics, spiky vocals, sheer melody, and those trademark driving rhythms, is perhaps the band's best work.

Despite the highs, trouble seemed to follow Dinger. His short-lived label, Dingerland, went belly up in 1974—an unfortunate business gaffe that certainly spurred the drummer's bitterness toward the music industry. And Rother jettisoned from Neu!, again, after a disagreement regarding musical direction. Dinger acted in kind: He found a measure of success, musically and commercially, with La Düsseldorf, which fused the rawness of the new wave with a Euro art-rock sensibility and sold a combined one million copies (by Dinger's estimates) of 1976's self-titled debut, 1978's *Viva*, and 1981's *Individuellos*.

Come the mid-'80s, though, a legal morass put a damper on Dinger's post-Neu! euphoria. "In 1985, 1986, Klaus lived in his Dutch studio and made the album *Neondian* with Conny Plank," says Miki Yui, Dinger's heir and life partner. "At the time he could not use the name La Düsseldorf, because of the [lawsuit] between [Klaus], Thomas Dinger, and Hans Lampe."

Rother and Dinger had impacted the growth of so many influential acts, having mentored, on some level, well-established artists such as David Bowie, Brian Eno, John Lydon, and Ultravox, that it's difficult to accept that there was a time when the band's music held little cache in industry circles and fell out of print. Such was the case when Neu! reconvened in the mid-'80s to record new material.

Further complicating matters, producer Plank declined to be involved with the new recording. Whether due to Plank's absence or the shifting mid-'80s pop trends, the reunion sessions were abandoned and went unreleased for ten years, but not for want of offers. Rother believed that Neu! would eventually issue the tracks when the time, and the deal, was right. But by the mid-'90s, Dinger, short on cash, had grown tired of waiting.

Against Rother's wishes, Dinger green-lighted the release of the sessions, eventually titled *Neu! 4* and issued in 1995 by the Japanese label Captain Trip Records (which also released *Neu! '72 Live in Düsseldorf* a year later). The appearance of *Neu! 4* did little to bridge the ever-widening gap between the band's protagonists. "Klaus sent me a note saying, 'Congratulations—*Neu! 4* will be out in Japan tomorrow,'" Rother says. "I didn't think that was so funny."

With the victory of *Neu! 4* in his pocket, Dinger formed the band La Neu? (The name is a mash-up of the two most important bands of his career.) But behind the scenes, a perfect storm was brewing: Dinger was hampered by the constant bootlegging of Neu! and La Düsseldorf material and by his long-held belief that he'd been plagiarized. As a result, the drummer waged a one-man war on the West, often preferring to taunt members of the media rather than talk with them.

"Klaus became paranoid and estranged himself from many people, and that has to do with his lifestyle," says Rother, who claims Dinger boasted about experiencing hundreds of LSD trips over the years. "He started to distrust everyone."

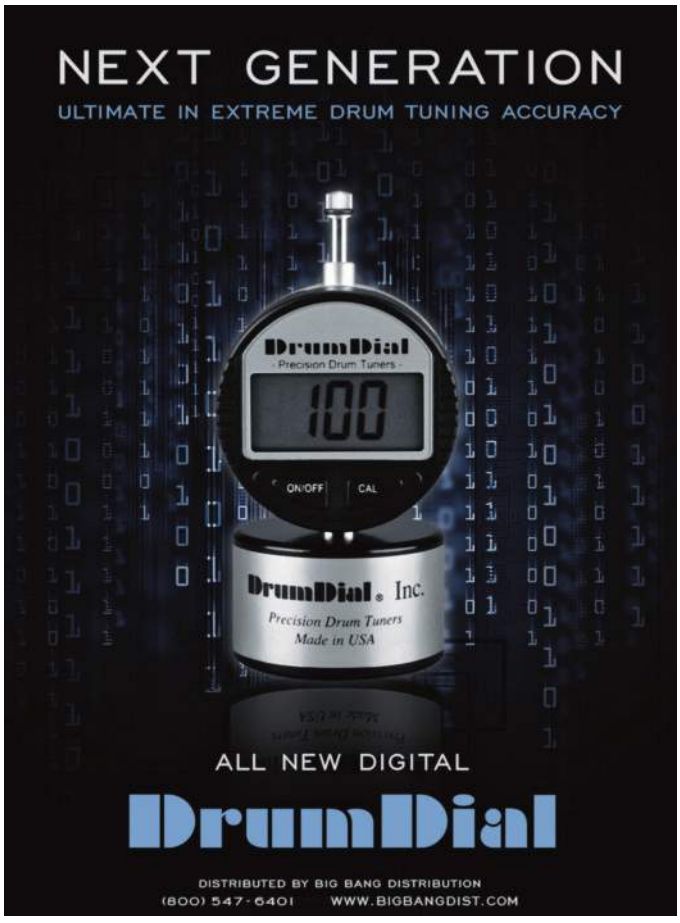
Then, in 2006 and 2007, when it appeared Rother and Dinger would patch things up, the duo couldn't agree on where to take the music. "If you had interviewed Klaus," Rother says, "I think he'd have pointed out different problems he had with me, or his views, which I didn't share because I was 'too stupid.' But I never had the feeling that he distrusted me."

The door was closed irreversibly when Dinger, busy working on a new La Düsseldorf album, *Japandorf*, died unexpectedly on Good Friday 2008 of a heart attack, at age sixty-two. (Unsurprisingly, Dinger held little trust in doctors and hospitals.)

Through the miracle of technology and the timelessness of music, however, Neu! was resurrected in 2009, when Rother, with Miki Yui's blessing, reworked *Neu! 4* from the original multitracks and master tapes and reclaimed, and renamed, it as *Neu! '86*. Released as part of a massive 2010 Neu! vinyl box set issued by Grönland Records, *Neu! '86* featured programmed beats and very un-Neu! techno-rock kit drumming by Georg Sessenhausen.

While it's uncertain what impact *Neu! '86* will have on Dinger's legacy, one thing is for sure: Despite his eccentricities and odd behavior, Dinger stands as one of Krautrock's most visionary musical minds. "It was a fantastic collaboration with Klaus," Rother says. "I'm connected to Klaus in my memory by all the great things he did for Neu!"

"Everything he did has deeper insight in time and space," Yui adds. "His love and strong creative spirit encourages, and I'll continue to keep his legacy alive."



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CHECKING IN WITH VINNIE
by Ilya Stemkovsky

More than thirty years after his first recordings, **VINNIE COLAIUTA** is still the most intriguing drummer on the planet. A couple of recent releases remind us why.

Two bassist-led albums featuring the illustrious Vinnie Colaiuta, with the green light to play with equal parts sensitive restraint and explosive chops? Yes, please! Mark Egan's *Truth Be Told* finds the drummer in classic funk/fusion mode, laying it down thick on "Café Risque" and blowing hard over the ending double-time vamp on "Pepé." Colaiuta engages in a head-spinning call-and-response during the organ solo of "Rhyme or Reason," and later throws in furious kick/snare combos guaranteed to make the uninitiated throw their sticks in the air. (wavetone.com)

Reunited with his 1970s Berklee buddies Bill Frisell and Kermit Driscoll, Colaiuta shows his free side on Driscoll's *Reveille*—listening, improvising, springing surprises, and fitting right in with his cohorts' envelope-pushing downtown aesthetic. "Thank You" opens with a beautifully textured drum solo in 9/4, while "Great Expectations" highlights the drummer's signature beat displacement and locomotive singles. (nineteeneight.com)

Like your Vinnie with some extra sauce? Between these two records, you need look no further.

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THE STROKES *ANGLES*

New York's answer to 1979 returns. *Angles* revels in guitar attacks worthy of Thin Lizzy and enough soaring synth pop to sink the Cars. It's a playland for Brazilian-born drummer **FABRIZIO MORETTI**, whose slinky grooves and big beat provide a strong rhythmic complement throughout. Moretti's drum sound is often synthetic, as if to approximate an old Akai MPC3000, but his swinging wallop shines through. "Under Cover of Darkness" is quintessential Strokes, and Fab's hi-hat bash is uplifting and propulsive. The drummer thumps some Keith Moon–style tom affection (and mad linear hi-hat sticking) on "Two Kinds of Happiness" and applies serious 6/8 prog rock pummel on *Angles*' drumming showcase, "Metabolism." (RCA) **Ken Micallef**

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TOPH-E & THE PUSSYCATS *NO ORDINARY DAY*

Drummer Chris Parker ("Toph"), of Brecker Brothers and *Saturday Night Live* band fame, leads a veteran group through a safe but well-played set of light R&B, smooth jazz, and Latin numbers. The meat here is Parker's pocket, and his laid-back syncopations are all over "Pussyfoot" and "BlackHouse." Dig the hip second-line snare breakdown on "Tee" and the way Parker locks in with *Letterman* bassist Will Lee's slapping on the greasy funk of "Opus de Toph-E." Parker has the touch of a mature studio cat, and while the listener might wish the proceedings weren't quite so reserved, that's what live gigs are for. (chrisparkerdrums.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO PLAYING BRUSHES
BY FLORIAN ALEXANDRU-ZORN
BOOK/DVD LEVEL: BEGINNER TO ADVANCED $29.99

Setting the bar for one-stop brush manuals, *The Complete Guide to Playing Brushes* aims to set your hands free. The typical circle-and-arrow diagrams are here. But, in a brilliant stroke, the focus is not on illustrating specific groove patterns. Instead, and more important, author Alexandru-Zorn breaks down a catalog of practical rhythm-motion patterns as applied to various note-value groups, allowing eventual independence for executing any pattern desired. The clincher is the outstanding DVD. Avoiding unnecessary yapping, Alexandru-Zorn demonstrates the breakdowns with front/overhead split-screen views that are definitively clear. Short transcribed grooves are offered for swing patterns and for rock, funk, and Latin usage as well. Also engaging is coverage of the twenty-six standard rudiments, executed with the maximum use of lateral sweeps for a full, distinctly brush-wise approach. And do *not* miss the eye-popping finale featuring the author in a knockout snare drum brush duet. (Alfred) **Jeff Potter**

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JAZZ DRUMS NOW! BY KEITH HALL
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Like our most fondly remembered schoolteachers, author Hall has that special knack for guiding students to their goals in a shrewdly uncluttered and non-intimidating manner. And students get a meatier tutoring than they might first realize. This volume presents basic jazz patterns and phrases that are later applied to rhythm-section playing. An effective MP3 CD packed with examples and play-along tracks illuminates the package. Along the way, readers receive wise advice that's rudimentary enough for beginners yet weighty enough for the advanced. "Say it with me," Hall writes, "the quarter note is KING." (keithhallmusic.com) **Jeff Potter**

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DR. THROWDOWN'S RUDIMENTAL REMEDIES
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As author Wooton's alter ego, Dr. Throwdown, says, "Rudimental drumming is the foundation to *all* types of drumming." And in its exploration of basic stroke types, rolls, and flams, this sixty-page book indeed covers a wide stylistic spectrum, with each lesson focusing on a different genre (funk, hip-hop, jazz, African, etc.). So while building up your chops, you're also learning music from around the world. Each lesson ends with a challenging etude. The two-hour DVD features downloadable play-along tracks applicable to corps-style snare drummers as well as drumset players. (rowloff.com) **Andrea Byrd**

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SELECTIVE MEMORIES

Three drumming autobiographies tell it like it is—in the spotlight and behind the scenes.

STRANGE THINGS HAPPEN: A LIFE WITH THE POLICE, POLO, AND PYGMIES

BY STEWART COPELAND

Fans of the Police may be disappointed that only ten of this book's 330 pages are dedicated to the eight years the author spent in the world-famous band (okay, plus a few more about the reunion tour). But in fairness to Copeland, there's so much more to his story than being a rock star. From his childhood years in Beirut, Lebanon (did you know his father was a CIA agent?), to a mid-'80s visit to Africa (*that* explains the Pygmies!), Copeland recounts snippets of his incredibly varied life in forty-three succinct chapters, plus seventy photos. From punk rocker to filmmaker (*Everyone Stares: The Police Inside Out*) to opera composer, he's done it all—even a stint as a judge on a BBC TV talent show. Copeland fans will enjoy getting an up-close view of the personal and professional life of this multifaceted musician. (theharperstudio.com) **Andrea Byrd**

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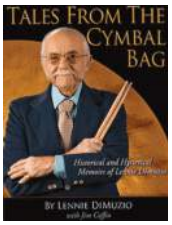
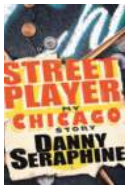


TALES FROM THE CYMBAL BAG

BY LENNIE DIMUZIO WITH JIM COFFIN

Tales traces the life and times of arguably the most well-known artist relations cat in the drum biz, Lennie DiMuzio. The book was cowritten with another of the self-proclaimed JEWOPs (Junior Executives Without Power), Jim Coffin, and you can picture the pair, sitting in a nightclub, telling endless stories over a few drinks. DiMuzio, a drummer himself, has had a memorable career in the cymbal industry, first at Zildjian (1961–2003), then as a consultant for Sabian. Some of the stories and jokes don't hold up as well on paper—Lennie's spoken delivery is infamous in industry circles—but nonetheless this is an enticing glimpse behind the scenes of countless drum clinics, trade shows, and concerts featuring some of the most famous drummers of the past half century. From Buddy and Bellson to Armand and Bob Zildjian, DiMuzio remembers them all. The book is dedicated to longtime *MD* photographer Lissa Wales, whose images provide much of the charm of this 288-page memoir. To paraphrase Coffin in the final chapter, the book isn't just about drummers, it's about lifetime friendships. (jumpbackbaby.com) **Andrea Byrd**



STREET PLAYER: MY CHICAGO STORY

BY DANNY SERAPHINE

To most fans, Danny Seraphine was simply the drummer in Chicago, playing classic grooves on hits such as "Beginnings" and "Make Me Smile." But, away from the stages and studios, Seraphine had taken the initiative to lead the band through its incredibly successful but tumultuous first twenty-three years. In his memoir, *Street Player*, Danny details all of the drama he navigated, including the death of guitarist Terry Kath, the departure of bassist Peter Cetera, and his own firing in 1990.

With more than two decades' worth of perspective on his shocking ouster from the band he helped form, Seraphine does not write with bitterness but instead insightfully details what caused his bandmates to make that life-changing decision. Particularly inspiring is the story of his triumphant comeback at the 2006 Modern Drummer Festival, after a long, difficult, and self-imposed exile from the music industry.

For fans of Chicago, or for those who simply like warts-and-all rock autobiographies that pull no punches, this is top-shelf. (John Wiley & Sons) **Philip Varriale**

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PEACE

Zach Danziger: *Hop*

A veteran of the studio and stage finds that drumming for bunnies is no joke.

by Ken Micallef

Zach Danziger has covered much ground in his twenty-plus-year career: playing drums for various R&B, fusion, and pop outfits; performing '70s revival shows (as Bert Slutsky); leading the drum 'n' bass band Boomish; even scoring popular film soundtracks. But Danziger has never been asked to play a rabbit. Until now. The box-office hit *Hop* features Zach's solo drumming on eight tracks. More than that, the starring bunny was animated to correctly follow the drummer's every movement on the kit, beat by beat, fill after fill.

Recording his parts at New York City's DeeTown Entertainment studios (where he works as a soundtrack composer), Danziger was required to produce audio of his performances as well as video. From there, the animators turned Zach Danziger, master drummer, into E.B., upstart Easter Bunny looking to make it big on the TV show *Hoff's Got Talent*. Songs covered include Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground" (performed with the Blind Boys of Alabama), Taio Cruz's "Dynamite," Bow Wow Wow's "I Want Candy," Hole's "Celebrity Skin," and Good Charlotte's "Anthem."

"The producers wanted video of every drum part I played," Zach explains, "shot from an angle where they could see exactly which drum was hit at any given time. They weren't trying to replicate my movements but rather were making sure that the animation was correct. They didn't graphically capture my movement like in sports video games. In that situation, you wear a suit, like spandex, with LEDs that are graphically transmitting computer data. That's why a basketball player in a video game will have realistic motions when he runs down the court."

Did Danziger replicate Stevie Wonder's drum track on "Higher Ground"? Or did his parts reflect E.B.'s drumming as portrayed on *Hoff's Got Talent*? "For 'Higher Ground,'" Zach explains, "they asked me to not play the bass drum, because in that shot the bunny can't reach the pedals. So I played the groove with a lot of toms instead of bass drum. It was how an overly zealous bunny would play the groove, not a drummer, per se.

"And I didn't copy Stevie Wonder's drum part. They wanted it to look exciting. I would send in many takes that sounded good but didn't have the right visual energy. They weren't looking to mimic my facial movements, but they wanted exciting visuals. So I might lift my arms up higher, the opposite of the economy of motion that we often aim for as drummers. Even though they didn't animate my face, they wanted to see me looking like I was excited, because that translated excitement to them. So I purposely played over the top, and that satisfied them. They wanted the energetic take, and then they would animate that movement to the audio."

The drums you hear in *Hop* are all Danziger's self-produced sounds, recorded at DeeTown with his arsenal of Pro Tools, Logic, and Shure and Beyerdynamic microphones. Danziger, of course, is a studio pro, but he says that *Hop* did present certain challenges. "For one of the songs," he recalls, "they asked me to watch some videos of an unknown drummer on YouTube for reference. The guy wasn't necessarily playing anything intricate or flashy—he was just selling it, *big time*. I tend to be more nonchalant when I play. It's more in my hands, not in my face. But I realized that if I didn't look like I was really into it, it didn't sound like I was into it. It would be like a weight lifter lifting a thousand pounds with one arm and making it look easy. I needed to look like I was lifting two hundred pounds and hanging on for dear life.

"It was important to be a showman, especially for the movie's target audience," Danziger concludes. "In the end, though, I was very happy with the final results; they captured every nuance of my playing."

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This kit, owned by Randy Charles of Hartford, Wisconsin, is largely about the cymbals, as you can see. There are more than twenty of 'em—by Zildjian, Sabian, and UFIP—including four sets of hi-hats. "The idea of having two hats on the left was inspired by Steve Gadd and provides amazing rhythmic possibilities," Charles says.

Several of the models have an interesting story. The dull-finish auxiliary hats on the right are 12" Zildjian K Special Dry prototypes from Steve Gadd's 2005 tour, and the 8" ZHT auxiliary hats were played in a clinic by Marco Minnemann. "The 12" prototypes never came to market," Charles says. "The two Constantinoples are special because the one on the right I found in Chicago during my daughter's wedding celebration, and the one on the left was also bought at the Steve Gadd event in 2005. One is a 20" Thin ride, the other a 20" Hi Bell Thin—both phenomenal sounding."

The kit includes Fibes drums, a Pearl maple piccolo snare, a PDP mini timbale, and LP cowbells. "When I was designing this layout," Charles says, "I wanted it to be very playable and also have it come together symmetrically so it's beautiful to view from *behind* the kit."

Still, why so many cymbals? "When I was young," the drummer explains, "I could only afford the essentials and would buy by size and purpose. As I've grown older, the sonic qualities have become the most important to me. Frequently I play the cymbals all by themselves and create a whole bunch of melodic and rhythmic pieces. The way you hit them and what you hit them with makes the sound palettes endless.

"When I'm in a store that offers a decent selection of cymbals," Charles adds, "I go in and tap, tap, tap. If something speaks to me, I usually end up taking it home. I have no more room to add, but I'm trying hard to figure out how. I just love the darn things!"

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to billya@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line of the message.

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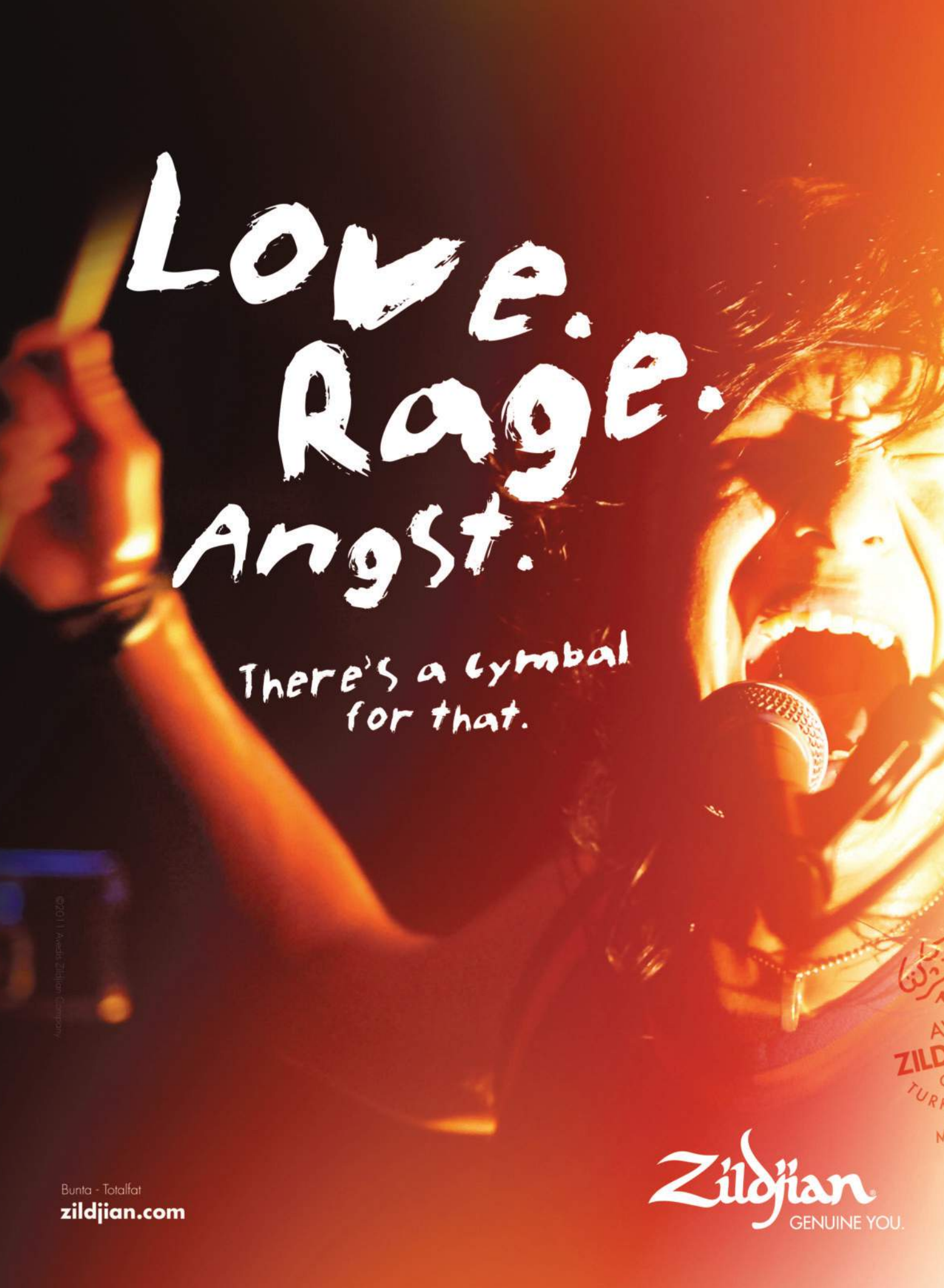
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